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Throughout history, monarchs have had a huge impact on the world, whether uniting nations or tearing them apart. Some have inherited great power, while others have fought to take what they saw as rightfully theirs. There have been kings who instigated wars to demonstrate their strength and conquer the world, and queens who helped shape the future of their nations. In this edition, we take a look at some of the most iconic and influential monarchs the world has ever seen, from Cleopatra and Richard the Lionheart, to Charlemagne and Eleanor of Aquitaine. We'll also take a look at the wars waged by King Henry VIII, uncover the man behind the myth of the monstrous Emperor Nero and discover the story of Britain's longest reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth II.

FUTURE

KINGS & QUEENS

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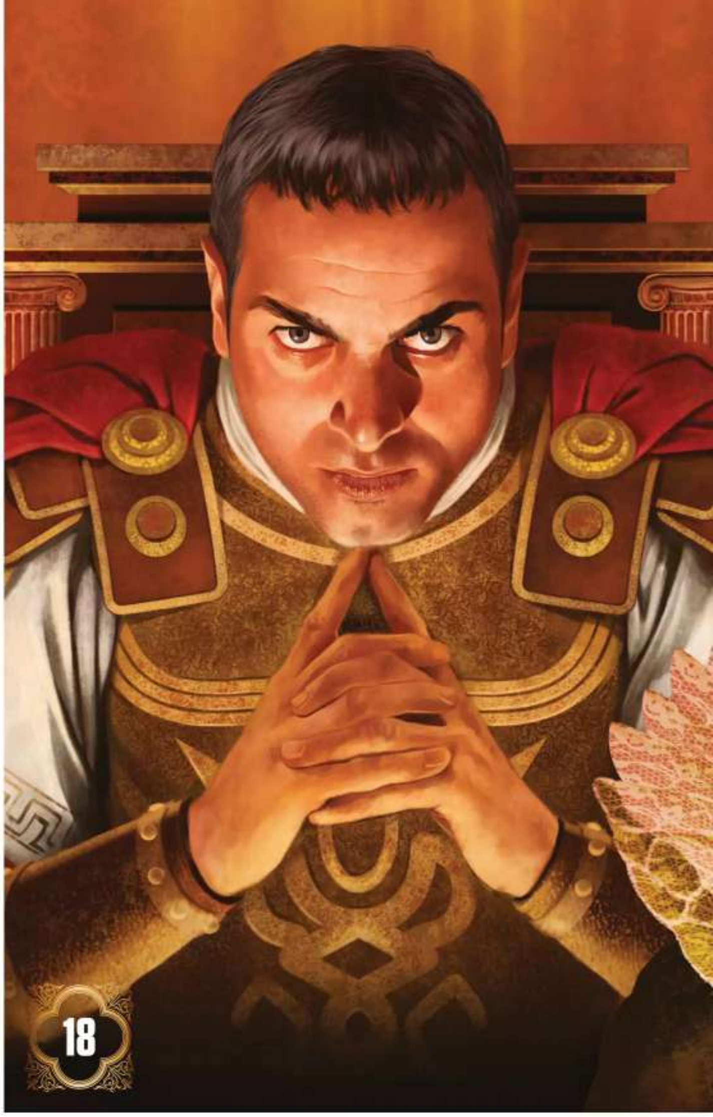

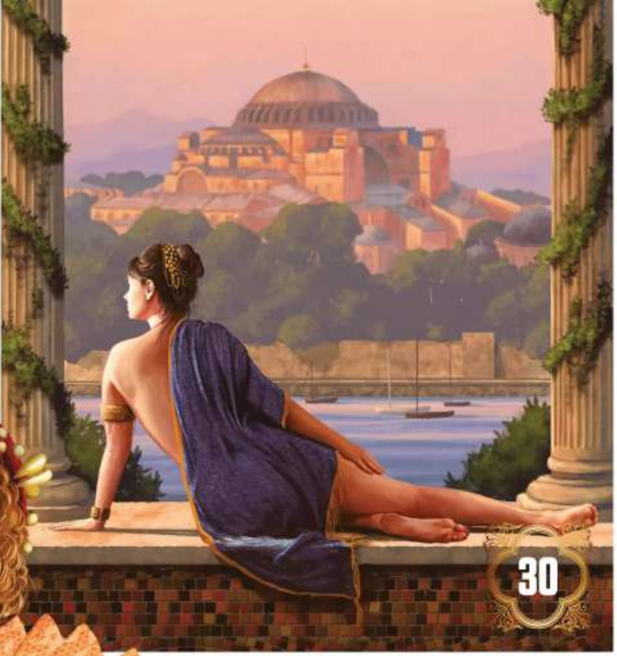

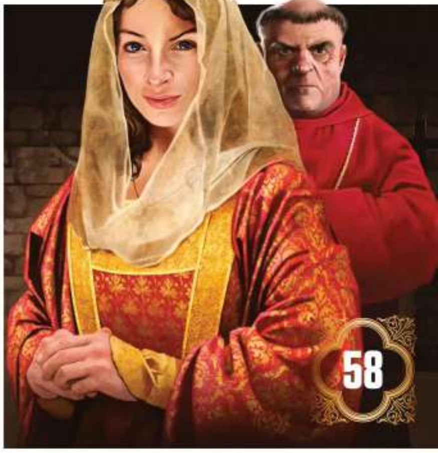

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336 – 323 BCE

Alexander the Great

The empire builder was as dangerous to his friends as he was to his enemies

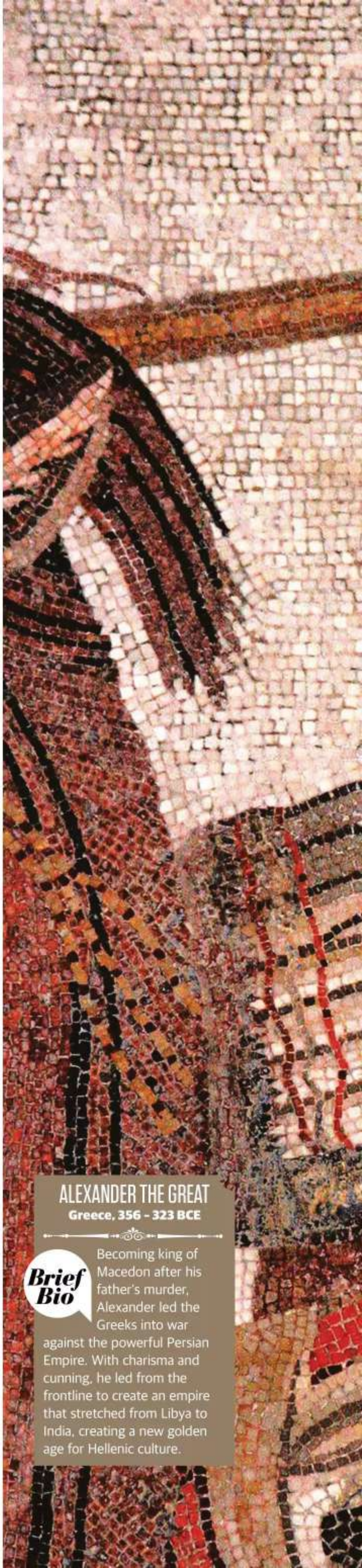
From the moment of his birth in 356 BCE, Alexander of Macedonia was destined for great things. He would grow up to conquer and rule one of the largest empires ever built, all through military prowess, shrewd diplomacy and sheer force of personality.

The young Alexander grew up believing his life would lead to greatness, which was partly due to his mother, Olympias, continually telling him that he was divine and that his destiny lay in conquest. Macedonia at the time of Alexander's birth was growing stronger, and this kingdom would act as his springboard to greatness.

Contrary to what was being written by chroniclers at the time, Alexander's father, Philip of Macedonia, did not lead the Macedonian people to civilisation - this had happened in previous generations. But when Philip was assassinated in 336 BCE and the crown passed to the 20-year-old Alexander, his greatest legacy was the extremely well trained and professional army he left, a crucial asset for every young warlord. Fate seemed to favour Alexander, as the political climate of the time made expansion even easier. The Greek cities were in decline and ripe for conquest. Even the mighty Persian Empire was troubled; having lost control of Egypt, it was engaged in a campaign to reassert control in the Nile delta. At this point, it would have been remarkable if Alexander had not expanded Macedonian territory.

With Darius III defeated and retreating, Alexander had effectively brought the Achaemenid Empire to an end

In his early life, Alexander was taught the ways of war from Leonidas of Epirus, a relative of his mother. Alexander learned hand-to-hand combat, riding and also endured forced marches, an experience that would endear him to his men in later life. While Philip of Macedonia needed his son to be tutored in warfare, he also saw the benefits of instructing Alexander in the ways of peace. For this, Philip sent for Alexander's most famous teacher, Aristotle. The Greek philosopher instilled a love of literature and reading in the young prince that would continue throughout his entire life. During this time in history, the lines between myth and history were slightly more blurred. Great heroes like Achilles, who featured in Homeric literature, were seen as avatars of heroic virtues to be emulated by readers. It is said that Alexander carried a copy of the Iliad with him on campaign, as he saw himself as having a competitive rivalry with Achilles while also claiming lineage from him. This

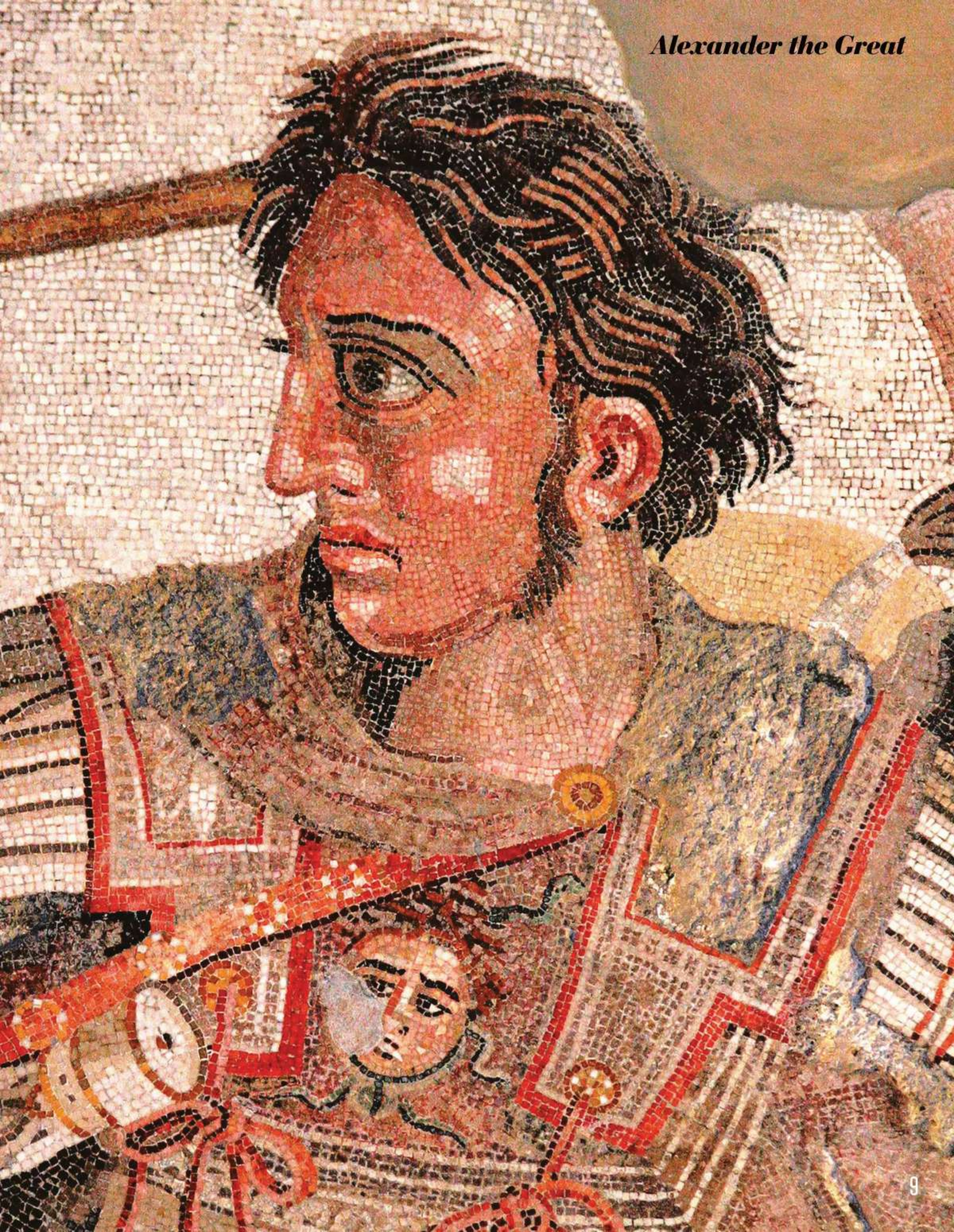


ALEXANDER THE GREAT

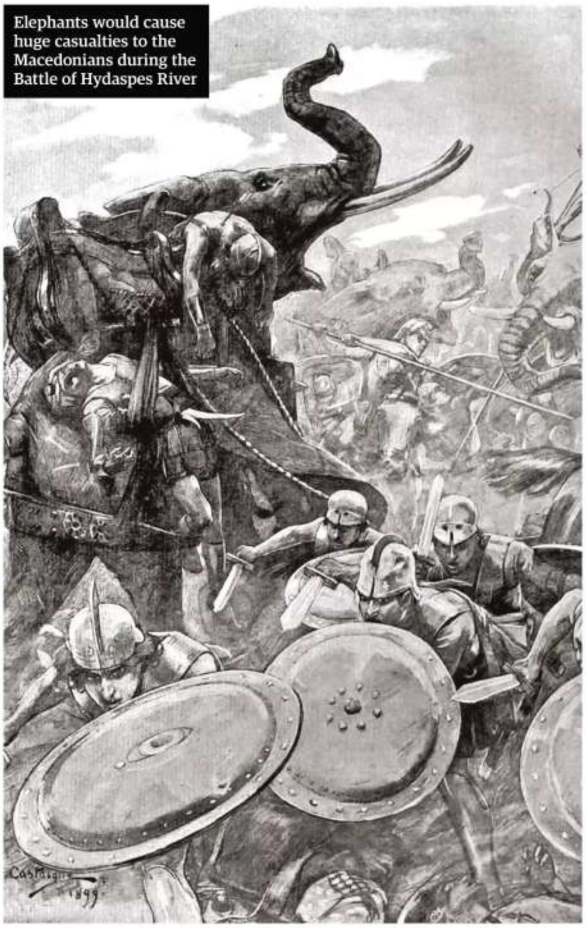
Greece, 356 - 323 BCE

Brief Bio

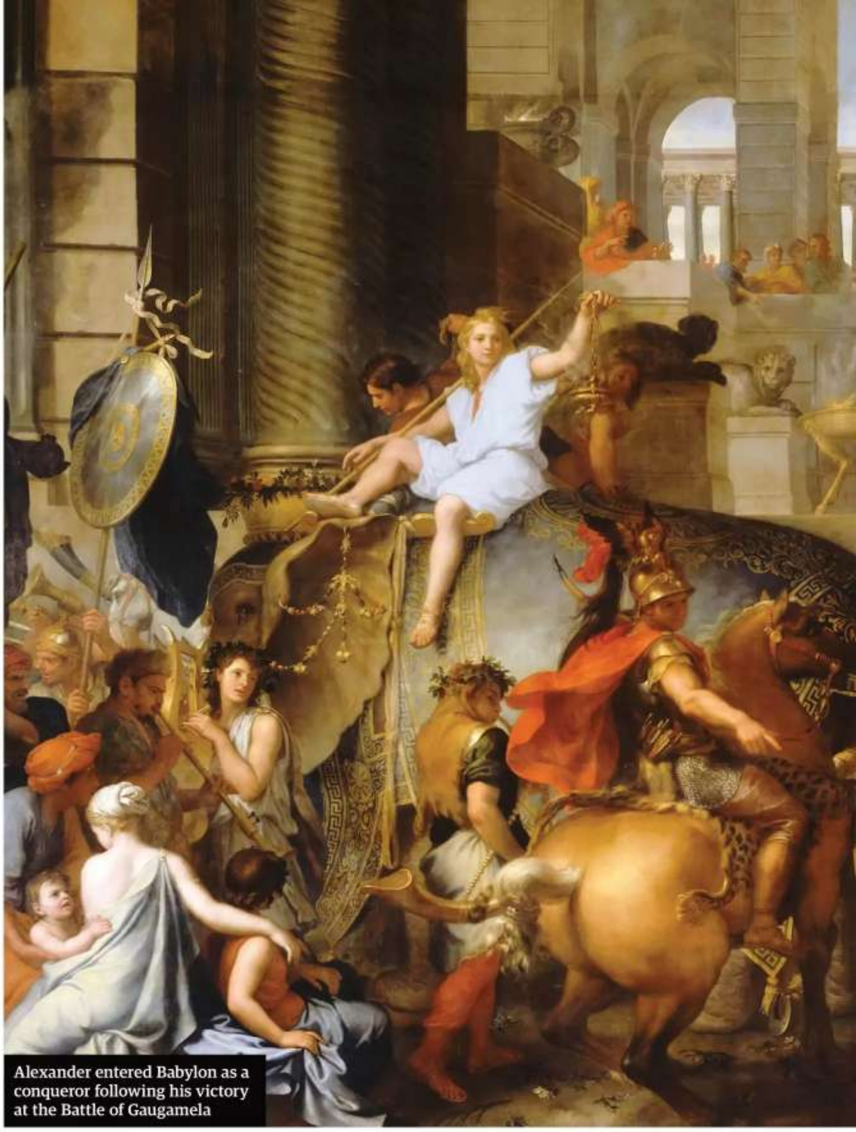
Becoming king of Macedon after his father's murder, Alexander led the Greeks into war against the powerful Persian Empire. With charisma and cunning, he led from the frontline to create an empire that stretched from Libya to India, creating a new golden age for Hellenic culture.



Alexander the Great



Elephants would cause huge casualties to the Macedonians during the Battle of Hydaspes River



Alexander entered Babylon as a conqueror following his victory at the Battle of Gaugamela

side of Alexander was softer than that shown on his military exploits, but could never temper his violent thirst and the passion that grew within him over time. Alexander's fondness for alcohol would lead to drunken mood swings, rages and even the burning of the palace and city of Persepolis. This volatile trait was only exacerbated by the death of his most trusted companion and friend, Hephaestion.

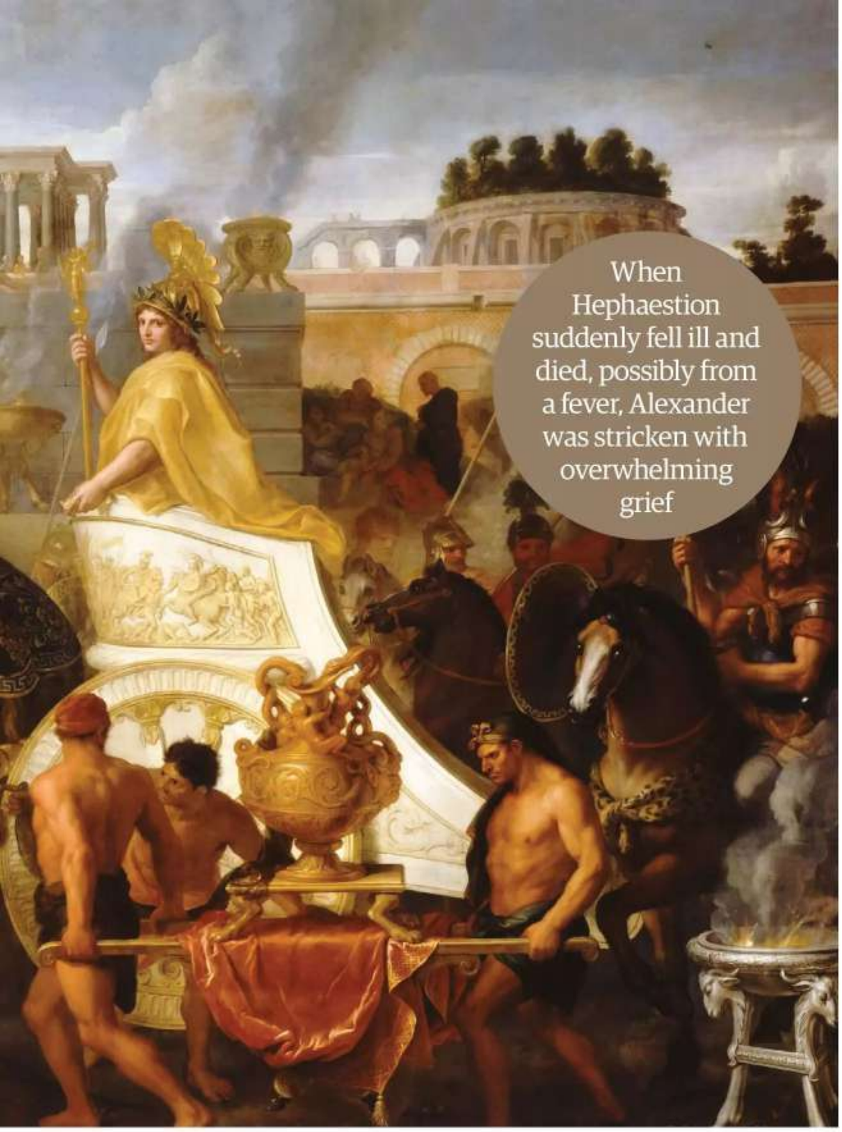
As the borders of his empire grew, Alexander became increasingly fixated with the idea that his success was divinely ordained. Constantly fed stories of this divinity from his mother, he saw himself as a descendant of Zeus and Achilles. While the stories told of Alexander's birth include a miraculous conception, the destruction of the Temple of Ephesus and a bright star lighting the night sky, other than his studies, not much is known of his early life. What we are sure of is that he would have taken part in drinking contests, which were common in Macedonian culture. It was here that he cemented friendships that would last his lifetime with his drinking partners Cassander, Ptolemy and Hephaestion, who became close companions and generals in his army.

During his conquests, Alexander never forcibly attempted to impose Hellenistic culture on those he had bested. This was a trait learned from Aristotle, and his subjects were allowed to practice their own beliefs without fear of reprisal. However, this was countered by Alexander's fierce stamping out of unrest or treachery. While not imposing his own culture on conquered peoples, Alexander came to adopt Persian culture more and more. This upset his Macedonian men, with two – Aristotle's great-nephew Callisthenes and a man named Cleitus – being the most outspoken. While Alexander appeared diplomatic and tactful to defeated enemies and subjugated peoples, he could not stand to be contradicted, even by close friends. Drinking exacerbated his temper, and during one drunken argument, Alexander hurled a javelin, skewering Cleitus and killing him instantly. Callisthenes's fate was a little better – he was imprisoned, dying either in captivity or by crucifixion.

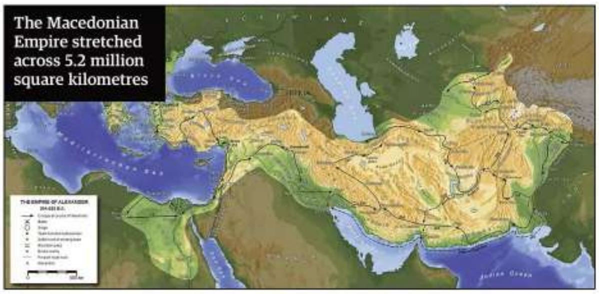
After his decisive victory at the Hydaspes River, the soldiers of Alexander's army had grown tired of conquest

Alexander's ruthless nature saw him make many uncompromising decisions during his many campaigns. Perhaps the most famous was during the siege of Tyre, an island city off the coast of Phoenicia, in 332 BCE. After early attacks were repulsed, Alexander ordered the construction of a massive causeway, or mole, to enable his siege engines to reach the walls. This massive undertaking was one of the ancient world's most initiative sieges, and is now the reason that Tyre is connected to the mainland. With the mole complete, his army stormed and captured the city. Showing no mercy, the attackers crucified 2,000 defenders, slaughtered up to another 6,000 males and sold the women and children into slavery. This was the price to pay for defying Alexander.

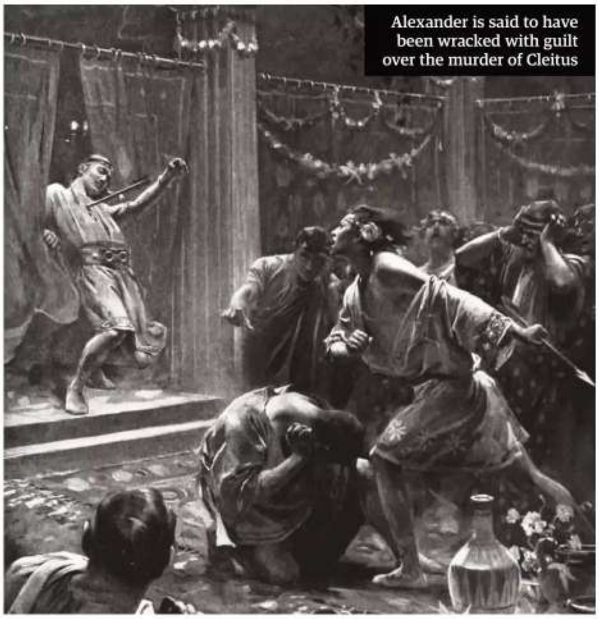
In Persia, now modern-day Iran, Alexander came face to face with his nemesis, King Darius III. In two great battles, at Issus and Gaugamela, the Macedonian army provided by Philip was triumphant, and Darius was defeated. These battles helped to cement Alexander's military prowess, as both times he faced almost overwhelming numbers and still emerged victorious. After hearing that the Persian king had been betrayed and murdered by one of his generals, Bessus, during his retreat, Alexander flew into yet another furious rage. He



When Hephaestion suddenly fell ill and died, possibly from a fever, Alexander was stricken with overwhelming grief



The Macedonian Empire stretched across 5.2 million square kilometres



Alexander is said to have been wracked with guilt over the murder of Cleitus

"Alexander appeared diplomatic and tactful to defeated enemies and subjugated peoples"

had greatly respected Darius as an opponent. After giving the deceased Persian king a fitting burial at Persepolis, Alexander hunted Bessus down and had him brutally executed.

Alexander's ambitions carried him further east until he reached the northern parts of India. While some rulers, upon hearing of his exploits, submitted without a fight, many other tribes fiercely resisted his intrusion into their land. After his defeat of King Porus of Paurava at the Battle of Hydas River in 326 BCE, Alexander again displayed how magnanimous he could be in victory. He installed the king as a ruler of a larger kingdom than he had had before - all because he fought bravely against the Macedonians.

It was in India that Alexander's army refused to go any further. Alexander had planned to cross the River Ganges, but when his troops discovered that tens of thousands of soldiers waited on the far bank, they insisted on returning home. Alexander's strict sense of justice would come to the fore again, as upon returning to his empire, he discovered that many of the satraps (governors) he had left in charge had become corrupt and abused their power. These men were executed along with the guards who had desecrated Cyrus the Great's tomb, showing Alexander's sympathy for Persian culture, as Cyrus was a great hero to them and a man Alexander admired. With his men exhausted and home sick, Alexander ordered that their debts be settled and the older or wounded men be allowed to return home. Such was their love of Alexander, the men refused, and only when the king threatened to replace their positions with Persians did they relent. A lavish banquet was held in which each senior Macedonian was married to a Persian bride. This turned out to be a failed attempt to bring the two cultures together, as many of the marriages didn't last the year.

Alexander's death at the age of 32 came suddenly in 332 BCE, after a bout of drinking. There are differing accounts of how exactly Alexander became ill and the exact cause of death - whether it was alcohol related, poison or another means - will never be known. Alexander's empire - which now encompassed a vast swathe of territory including Macedonia, the Greek city states, Anatolia, the Levant, Egypt, former Persian Empire territory and parts of India - would come crashing down after his ignoble death. His closest companions, the Diadochi, divided the land between themselves, and without the commanding presence of Alexander, they soon descended into bitter feuds and conflict. New factions and states emerged with the splintering of the empire, notably the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt, named after the general Ptolemy. Although the empire was gone, Hellenistic culture had taken root over a great swathe of territory, ensuring Alexander's legacy would live on through the ages.

His charisma and force of personality inspired fanatical loyalty and he could be magnanimous to conquered subjects. In contrast, Alexander acted as a cruel tyrant ordering systematic slaughters, and was prone to flying into drunken rages, making him dangerous to friend and foe alike.

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51 – 30 BCE

Cleopatra

How the middle daughter of a despised pharaoh fought, schemed and seduced her way to becoming the most famous Egyptian ruler of all

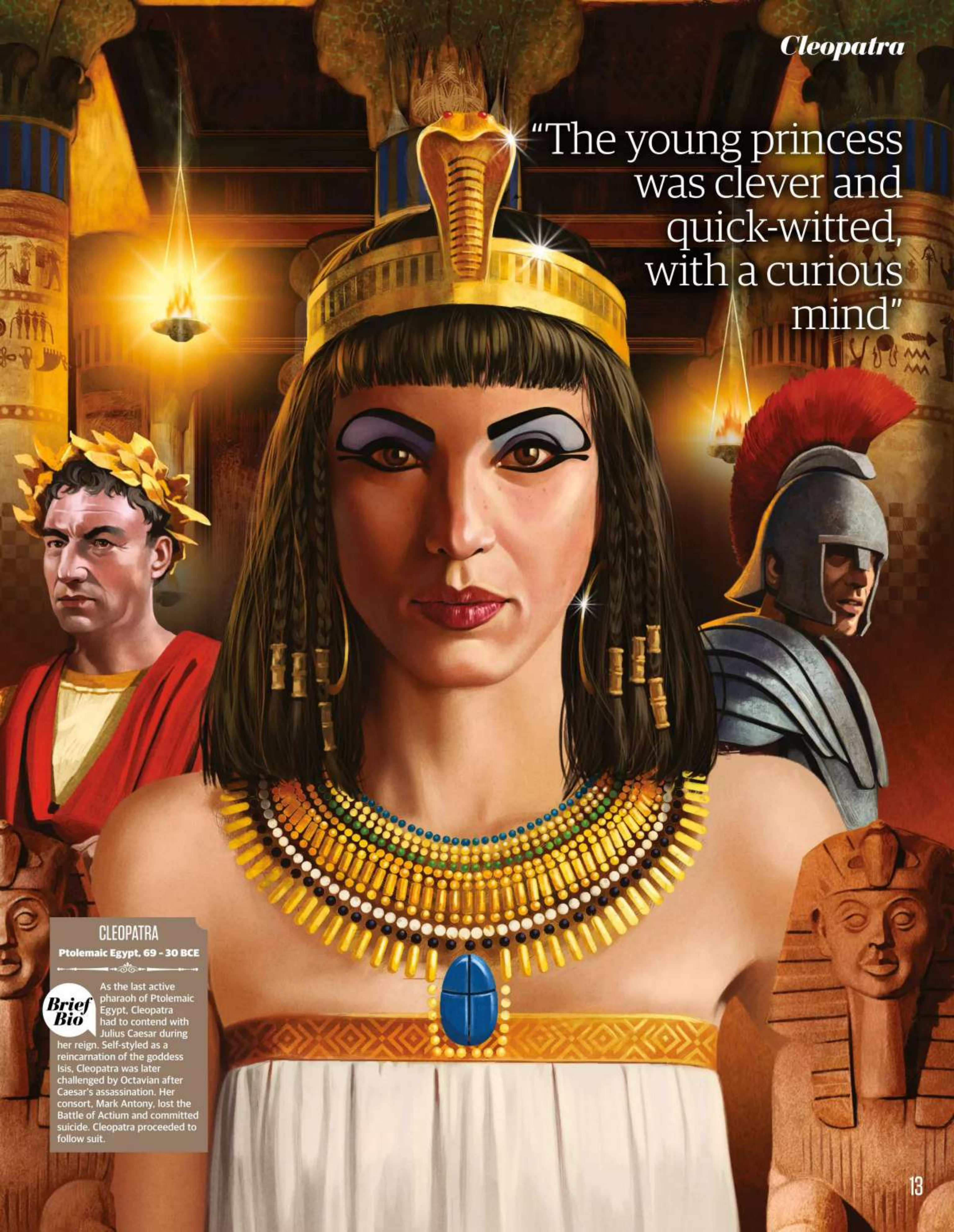
Egypt was in turmoil. In the year 81 BCE Ptolemy IX, the pharaoh who had dared to melt down the gold coffin of Alexander the Great, was dead. A series of bloody and violent family feuds had robbed his dynasty of any legitimate male heirs, so his popular and beloved daughter, Bernice III became queen. Following the family tradition, she married her half-brother, Plotemy XI, but just 19 days after the ceremony, the groom had his new bride murdered and claimed the throne as his own. The citizens of Alexandria were furious, and an angry mob quickly seized the new pharaoh and lynched him. This left Egypt leaderless and seemingly out of control.

Cleopatra was highly educated, and is rumoured to have been able to speak as many as a dozen different languages

As the commander of the army and the personification of god on Earth, a pharaoh's presence was essential to prevent mass unrest in Egypt and anyone, absolutely anyone, was better than no pharaoh at all. So the throne was offered to the illegitimate sons of Ptolemy IX, and Ptolemy XII stepped forward to claim it. A notorious womanizer with a fondness for drink and excess, he was hardly the shining beacon the struggling country needed to guide it through the darkness of the pit it had fallen into. A nickname for the illegitimate pharaoh quickly became popular - Nothos, or 'the bastard.' Ptolemy XII had at least five legitimate children, and Cleopatra VII was the second oldest after her sister, Berenice IV.

The young princess was clever and quick-witted, with an eager and curious mind driven by a near-insatiable thirst for knowledge. She easily excelled at her studies and even her esteemed scholars were amazed by her aptitude for languages, readily conversing with any foreign visitors whether they were Ethiopians, Hebrews, Troglodytes, Arabs, Syrians, Medes or Parthians. While she surrounded herself with the wonders of the academic world in the riches and luxury of the royal residence, outside her palace the real one was being stretched at the seams, in danger of being ripped apart.

Pharaoh Ptolemy XII was in a troublesome position. His father had promised Egypt to Rome, a promise the Roman Senate had chosen not to act on - not yet, at least. Still, Ptolemy XII was smart enough to understand that to keep the Romans happy was to ensure Egypt's survival. He sent masses of money and bribes to Julius Caesar (at that time one of Rome's most important figures), which secured the Romans' support, but dammed him in the eyes of his tax-burdened citizens. In 58 BCE he was forced into exile, taking his talented younger daughter with him. When he finally returned three years later, with the backing of a



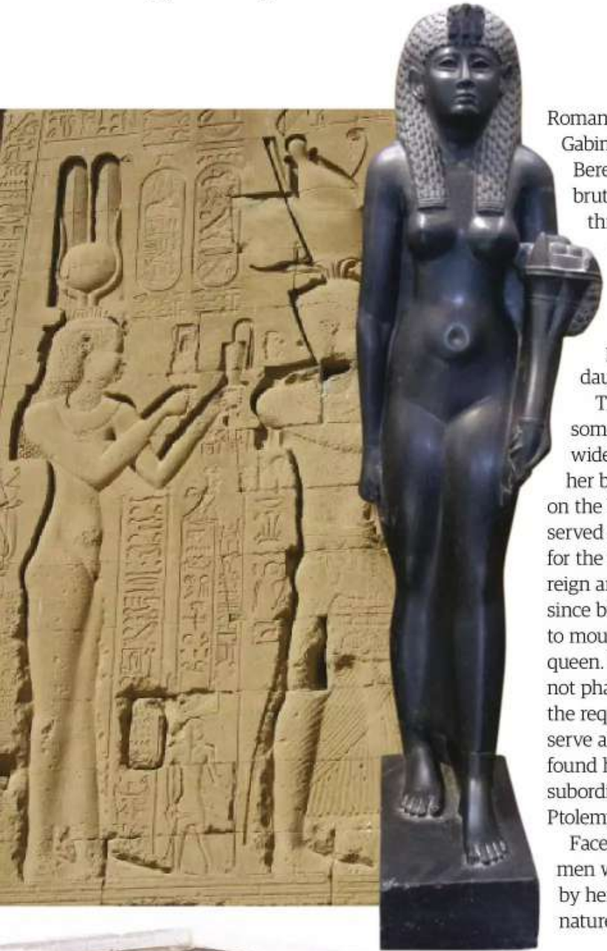
> “The young princess was clever and quick-witted, with a curious mind”

CLEOPATRA

Ptolemaic Egypt, 69 – 30 BCE

Brief Bio

As the last active pharaoh of Ptolemaic Egypt, Cleopatra had to contend with Julius Caesar during her reign. Self-styled as a reincarnation of the goddess Isis, Cleopatra was later challenged by Octavian after Caesar's assassination. Her consort, Mark Antony, lost the Battle of Actium and committed suicide. Cleopatra proceeded to follow suit.



Roman army courtesy of the statesman Aulus Gabinius, he discovered his oldest daughter Berenice sitting on the throne. Displaying the brutal and uncompromising ferocity that ran through his entire family, he had his daughter summarily executed. He then proceeded to reclaim the throne, from which he ruled until his death in 51 BCE. The crown and all the debts he had amassed became the property of his oldest surviving daughter, Cleopatra.

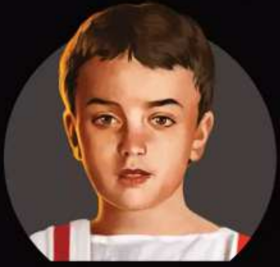
The 18-year-old was not - as some expected - a naïve, wide-eyed child torn from her books to rule a kingdom on the brink of war. She had served as consort to her father for the final few years of his reign and all her education since birth had been designed to mould her into a capable queen. Queen, that was; not king, not pharaoh. Cleopatra was cursed by the requirement of all Egyptian queens to serve alongside a dominant male co-ruler and so found herself burdened with the task of being a subordinate co-regent to her ten-year-old brother, Ptolemy XIII.

Faced with a regency council full of ambitious men who ruled in her brother's stead and led by her own ruthless, impatient and intelligent nature, Cleopatra pushed her brother-husband into the background and established herself as sole monarch of the country. This was dangerous; the Alexandrian courtiers swarmed over the young, impressionable king, filling his head with whispers of sole rule and the dangers of his older sister. If Cleopatra had been more patient and attentive, she could perhaps have trained a capable and obedient co-ruler in him, one who would have aided her rule, instead of bringing it crashing down. But that was simply not the Ptolemy way, and she was a Ptolemy in every sense of the word - daring, ambitious and deadly. She dropped her brother's image from coins and erased his name from official documents. With her skill, drive and cunning she was perfect for rule; in her mind she deserved Egypt and wasn't prepared to share it.

> She had four children by two fathers - Caesar and Mark Antony - but only one, Cleopatra Selene, made it to adulthood

The early years of her reign would be testing, as not only was the country still struggling under the father's debts, but years of infrequent floods of the Nile had led to widespread famine. Over her shoulder Cleopatra could feel the ever-looming and rapidly expanding threat of Rome, and with a weak Egyptian army, her fertile land was ripe for the picking. As hungry peasants flooded into the cities, Cleopatra's popularity plummeted, and her repeated decisions that seemed designed to please Rome at Egypt's expense reminded the bitter population of her despised father.

A husband & two lovers



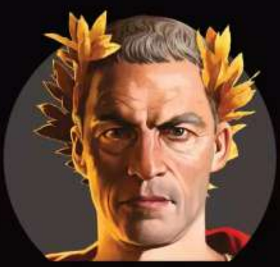
Ptolemy XIII Theos Philopator

Macedonian, 62-47 BCE

How did they get together?
The marriage between Ptolemy and his sister was arranged, as was the tradition with Egyptian royalty.

Was it true love?
Considering their joint rule erupted into a brutal civil war, we can assume there was little love lost between the siblings. There is no evidence they consummated their marriage.

How did it end?
Ptolemy was forced to flee Alexandria when the forces of Caesar and his sister-wife Cleopatra claimed victory. He reportedly drowned attempting to cross the Nile when fleeing.



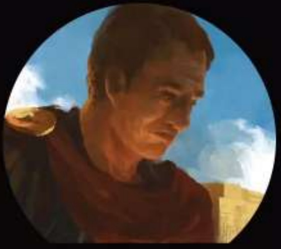
Julius Caesar

Roman, 100-44 BCE

How did they get together?
Cleopatra and her brother both needed Caesar's support. Cleopatra met with Caesar before their scheduled meeting and managed to sway his vote. Her methods can be left to the imagination.

Was it true love?
Although the union was initially spawned from mutual political gain and the two were forbidden by Roman law to marry, Cleopatra seemed to stay loyal to Caesar and had his child.

How did it end?
This love affair was cut short when Caesar was assassinated on the Ides of March.



Mark Antony

Roman, 83-30 BCE

How did they get together?
Antony summoned Cleopatra to see if she would hold true in her promised support during the war against the Parthians. She reportedly charmed him during this meeting, perhaps much the same way she had Caesar.

Was it true love?
Although it may have been borne out of political agendas, the two had three children together, and Antony risked everything to be with his Egyptian queen.

How did it end?
After the ill-fated Battle of Actium, Antony committed suicide upon mistakenly hearing Cleopatra was dead, and she quickly followed suit.

In the middle of this political turmoil, Cleopatra found herself facing a familiar rival. Her brother was back and, aided by his many guardians and regents, was now a vicious and ruthless king who was not afraid to wipe her from the land and from history. He completely erased his sister's name from all official documents and backdated his monarchy, claiming sole rule since his father's death. With her popularity and reputation already in tatters, the disgraced queen fled the city of her birth before an angry mob could storm the palace and inflict upon her the same grisly fate as so many of her greedy and ill-fated predecessors.

Having lost not only the support of her people but also the land she so strongly believed was hers to rule, Cleopatra escaped to Syria with a small band of loyal supporters. Fuelled by outrage at her brother, and even more so at the advisors who had crafted him into a vicious enemy, Cleopatra did not abandon her ambitions, but set about building the army she would need to reclaim her throne. As the female pharaoh amassed her forces in Syria, her young brother, barely 13 years old, became distracted by the ever-pressing Roman civil war. After a humiliating defeat to Caesar in Pharsalus, the Roman military leader Pompey the Great fled to the one place he was assured he could find refuge; his old ally, Egypt.

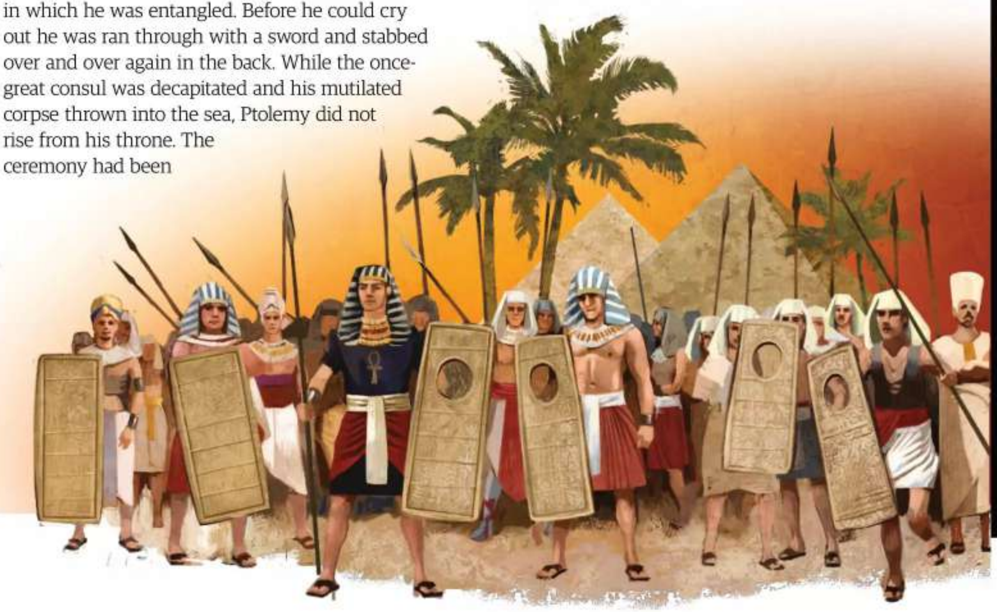
> Cleopatra did not abandon her ambitions, but set about building the army she would need to reclaim her throne

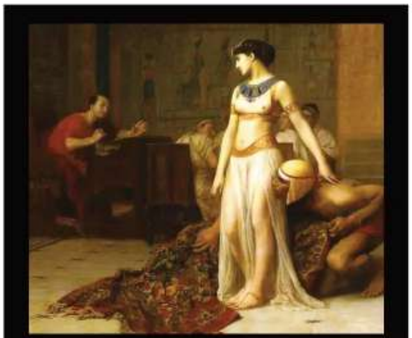
With his wife and children watching nervously from afar, Pompey disembarked his grand ship to board a small fishing boat to the shore. The Egyptian boy pharaoh, Ptolemy, sat on the shore in a throne fashioned specifically for the occasion. He watched Pompey closely, his face guarded and unreadable, but the men around him threw their arms open and, with wide smiles, cried, "Hail, commander!" It was not until the ship reached the shore that Pompey realised the murderous web in which he was entangled. Before he could cry out he was ran through with a sword and stabbed over and over again in the back. While the once-great consul was decapitated and his mutilated corpse thrown into the sea, Ptolemy did not rise from his throne. The ceremony had been a ruse; a rival of Caesar's was more valuable dead than alive.

When Caesar arrived in the harbour of Alexandria four days later, he was presented with the head of his rival. However, in mere moments Ptolemy's advisors realised their mistake, for the Roman general was completely and utterly appalled. He wept loudly and openly before leading his forces to the royal palace in Alexandria. As he observed the local resentment and civil war threatening to break the land in two he made a decision; he needed the wealth that Alexandrian taxes would give him, and the only way of increasing taxes was to establish stability in the city. The sibling rivalry had to end. He summoned Cleopatra and Ptolemy to appear before him. This was easy for Ptolemy who swiftly journeyed to Alexandria, but Cleopatra would have to use all her cunning just to make it into the city alive.

With the harbour blocked by her brother's ships, she slipped away from her troops and travelled in a small boat along the coast in the dead of night. Her journey had been completely and utterly unfitting for a pharaoh of Egypt, a Ptolemy queen; but victory demanded sacrifice and she was confident the streets and waters she was being smuggled down would soon be hers again. It had been a challenge to make it into the palace district, but the real night's work was about to begin - she was about to go face to face with arguably the most powerful man in the known world.

Her brother would bend over backwards, slay Caesar's enemies and kiss his feet for his support, but he was quick to panic, eager to please and terrified of angering Rome. Her brother was a fool. Caesar needed Egypt as much as Egypt needed Rome and she would use that fact to her advantage.





Five myths unravelled

She was smuggled in a rug

The image of a dishevelled and flushed Cleopatra being unrolled from a Persian rug at Caesar's feet after being smuggled into the palace comes from the overzealous pen of Greek biographer Plutarch, but it's difficult to prove this happened. It seems unlikely that Caesar, one of the most powerful men in the world, would have welcomed a suspicious package into his room and even if so, there's no reason for her not to have emerged earlier and made a more elegant entrance.

She was a femme fatale

The idea that Cleopatra flittered between powerful men, wooing and manipulating with no idea of who fathered her children, is the result of an ancient smear campaign run against her by Roman officials. In fact, there's only evidence of her having been with two men: Julius Caesar and Mark Antony.

She was Egyptian

One of the most famous Egyptian pharaohs of all time wasn't Egyptian at all - she was Greek. Her family line is that of Ptolemy, one of the generals of Alexander the Great, and despite her family living in Egypt for over 300 years, she would have been regarded as Greek. Cleopatra was actually rare in that she could speak Egyptian, unlike many of her predecessors.

She wore a fake beard

The concept of female Egyptian queens sporting fake beards comes from the Egyptian belief that the god Osiris had a grand beard, prompting Egyptian pharaohs to do the same to establish themselves as divine beings. But by the time of Cleopatra this tradition had all but died out, and there's no record of her donning a fake beard. In fact, the only female pharaoh known to have worn one is Hatshepsut.

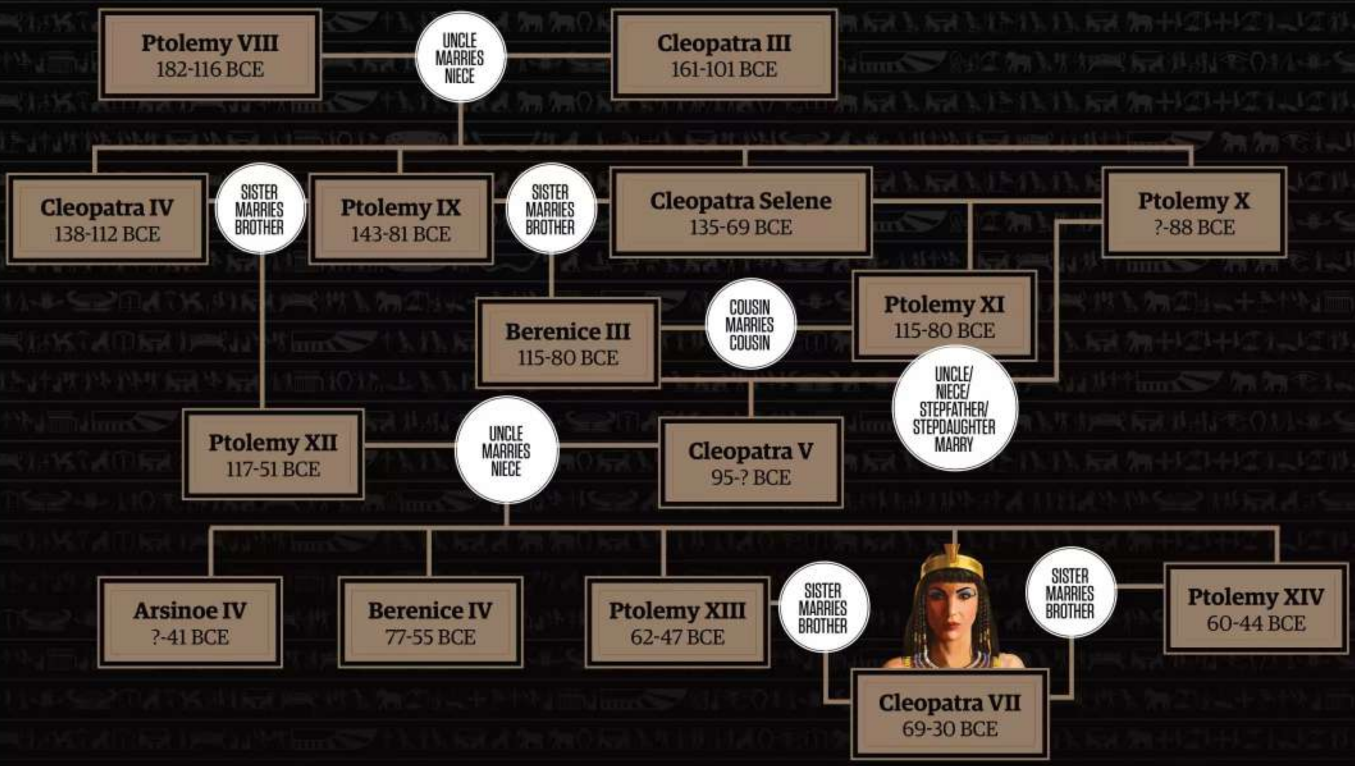
She died from an asp bite

This myth has gained momentum due to paintings of Cleopatra holding a snake to her bosom as she passes away. However, the accounts of this event are in some doubt, mainly because an asp will not cause a quick death as Cleopatra's was reported to be. It is more likely she drank a combination of poisons. The idea that the asp bit her breast is certainly incorrect, as all ancient sources state it bit her on the arm.

All in the family

Follow Cleopatra's family tree and discover just how close-knit the Ptolemies really were...

The Ptolemies of Egypt could trace their ancestry to Ptolemy I Soter, a Greek general of Alexander the Great who became ruler of Egypt in 323 BCE. After Alexander's death, his most senior generals divided his vast territory between themselves. Completely oblivious to the dangers of interbreeding, it became customary for the Ptolemies to marry their brothers and sisters. It was convenient for them as not only did it ensure queens could be trained for their role from birth, but also established them as an elite, untouchable class far removed from the masses, similar to the revered Egyptian gods who married their sisters.


Ptolemy VIII
182-116 BCE
UNCLE MARRIES NIECE
Cleopatra III
161-101 BCE
Cleopatra IV
138-112 BCE
SISTER MARRIES BROTHER
Ptolemy IX
143-81 BCE
SISTER MARRIES BROTHER
Cleopatra Selene
135-69 BCE
Ptolemy X
?-88 BCE
Berenice III
115-80 BCE
COUSIN MARRIES COUSIN
Ptolemy XI
115-80 BCE
UNCLE/ NIECE/ STEPFATHER/ STEPDAUGHTER MARRY
Ptolemy XII
117-51 BCE
UNCLE MARRIES NIECE
Cleopatra V
95-? BCE
Arsinoe IV
?-41 BCE
Berenice IV
77-55 BCE
Ptolemy XIII
62-47 BCE
SISTER MARRIES BROTHER
SISTER MARRIES BROTHER
Ptolemy XIV
60-44 BCE
Cleopatra VII
69-30 BCE

She would not wait to bow and plead her case alongside a child, she was going to speak to the Roman general that night. She sneaked into the palace and managed to find her way into Caesar's private chamber.

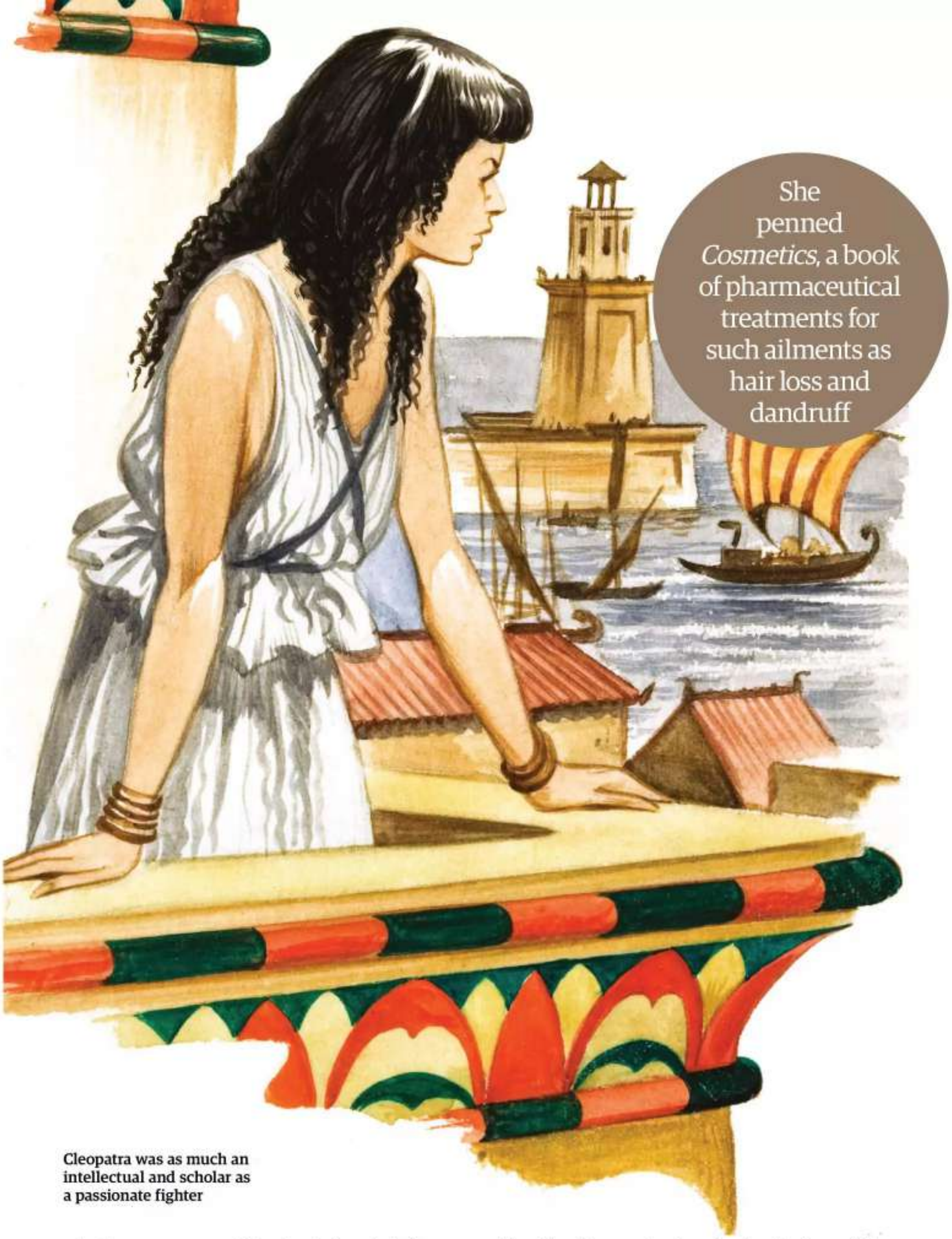
The 'dictator in perpetuity', as he would come to be known in Rome, towered over the small woman; she would have to crane her head to look him in the eye, she realised instantly. He was far older than the young, bold Egyptian queen and his receding hairline was poorly disguised. The general was past his physical prime, but he had just won his greatest victory. This was her first time gazing upon the Roman celebrity known the world over, but this was also the first time he was facing her. Her brother was a child, a mere puppet pharaoh on strings, dancing to the pulls of his corrupt advisors, but she had been granted all the charm, intelligence and ambition of her forefathers. She would steal Caesar and Rome's support while her brother slept; her charisma would succeed where her brother's sword had failed.

Cleopatra's image on a silver coin showed her to have a hooked nose

The young Ptolemy XIII awoke the next day, not expecting his dangerous older sister to have even made it to the palace. When he discovered that not only was she there, but had also seduced Caesar overnight into joining her cause, it was the final straw. Screaming in desperation, he fled from the palace, tore his crown from his head and fell to his knees. His sister had done it again. She was completely and utterly impossible to get rid off and, even as the crowd surged forward in protest, Caesar could not be swayed. The siblings would rule Egypt together, just as their father had intended. Rome had spoken.

The apparent peace did not last long. Already poisoned by the ambitious whispers that had fed his youth, Ptolemy joined with his rebellious sister Arsinoe IV. Between them they amassed an army large enough to challenge Cleopatra and Caesar's forces in Egypt. The country they fought for would pay the price, and in December of 48 BCE the famous stone city of Alexandria was set alight, destroying not only the lives of hundreds of citizens, but also the world-famous library that housed countless priceless manuscripts. When Caesar's reinforcements poured into the city from Pergamum, Ptolemy's forces were finally defeated. The young and impetuous king tried to flee across the Nile in an overcrowded boat, but his vessel sank, dragging him and his elaborate, heavy golden armour down with it.

One Ptolemy was dead, but another still lived. Ptolemy XIV, Cleopatra's 13-year-old brother, became her husband and co-ruler immediately after her brother's death. She might have had Caesar's support, but tradition was still tradition



She penned *Cosmetics*, a book of pharmaceutical treatments for such ailments as hair loss and dandruff

Cleopatra was as much an intellectual and scholar as a passionate fighter

and a lone woman could not rule Egypt. As for Caesar, he had put in place a reliable partnership and Egypt was, for all intents and purposes, a Roman territory. In a lavish display of the new union, a fleet of Roman and Egyptian ships sailed down the Nile accompanied by the grand royal barge where Cleopatra and Caesar sat together.

Egypt and Rome were united, but Cleopatra still found herself co-ruler to another Ptolemy who would inevitably grow up to be ambitious and treacherous. She could not allow another brother to be swayed by advisors and driven against her. As long as Ptolemy XIV lived, her rule was threatened. She wasn't a fool, she knew Egypt would never accept a solitary female queen, but there was a technicality that would ensure her effective sole rule. Her partnership with Caesar had provided more than his political support; she was pregnant and in 47 BCE she gave birth. The gods' will was in her favour - the child was a boy. She named him Caesarion, or 'Little Caesar', and now had an heir. For three years Cleopatra tightened her grip on the Egyptian throne, slowly winning the love of the Alexandrian mobs that had previously screamed for her head. She travelled to Rome with her son and resided in Caesar's country house as heated rumours about the paternity of her son gained speed. She did little to squash them; a possible heir of Caesar was a very powerful tool to have.

When Caesar was assassinated on 15 March 44 BCE, Cleopatra left Rome and returned to Alexandria. If there was ever a time to act, it was now. Without her powerful Roman lover by her side she needed an ally who could assure her rule, one who wasn't going to lead a rebellion against her. Brothers, she had learned, could not be trusted. Later that year the youngest Ptolemy was found dead, seemingly poisoned. The people's grief was muted; the death of Ptolemies, however young, was not so uncommon in Egypt, and the people had a new pharaoh to replace him: the young Caesarion. Cleopatra had finally done it, she was Egypt's pharaoh, and with her son an infant she was ruling alone in all but name. The power of Egypt was hers.

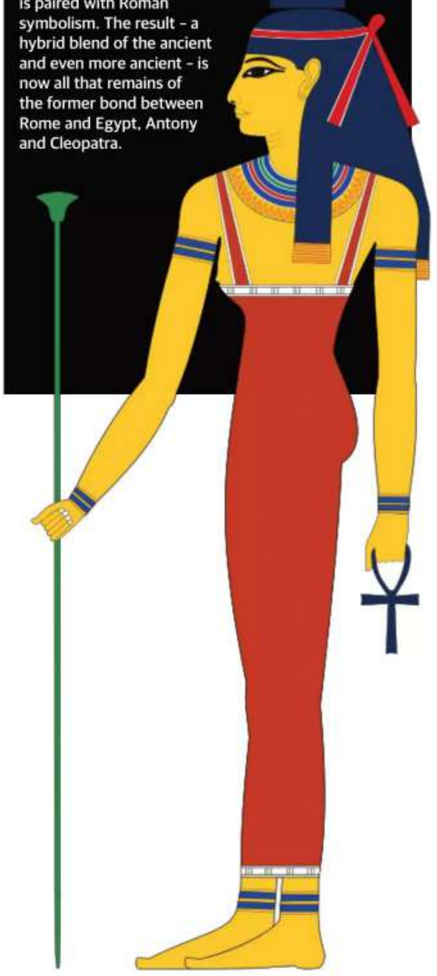
End of an Era

Cleopatra's surviving children were adopted by Octavia. They became Roman citizens and faded quickly into obscurity. Egypt, now a Roman province, was ruled by a prefect. Greek remained the official language. While Alexandria continued to flourish, it became a site of many religious and military uprisings.

In 269 CE, Alexandria was claimed by yet another woman, when Zenobia, the ferocious warrior queen of Palmyra, conquered Egypt. Zenobia, who was an admirer of Cleopatra, was quick to behead her detested Roman foes. She ruled Egypt until 274, before she herself was taken hostage by the Roman Emperor Aurelian. In an ironic twist of fate, Zenobia appeared in golden chains during Aurelian's Triumph in Rome.

The legacy of Greco-Roman Egypt still survives. It can be seen in a series of magnificent temples that were built along the River Nile. These include the Temple of Hathor at Dendera, where fabulous images of Cleopatra and Caesarion still dominate the walls therein.

The delicate amalgamation of the Egyptian and Roman cultures can also be seen on many mummy portrait panels from the Greco-Roman period. Contrasts are visible in paintings and sculptures where traditional Egyptian iconography is paired with Roman symbolism. The result - a hybrid blend of the ancient and even more ancient - is now all that remains of the former bond between Rome and Egypt, Antony and Cleopatra.



NERO

Rome, 37 - 68 CE

Brief Bio

Nero became heir to the throne after being adopted by his great-uncle Claudius. During his 13-year reign he was viewed as corrupt, compulsive and violent, having had his mother killed and perhaps his stepbrother too. After a successful rebellion, Nero fled Rome and committed suicide, ending the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

54 – 68 CE

Nero

He slaughtered Christians, murdered his loved ones and possibly set Rome ablaze, but who was the real man behind the myth of the monstrous Emperor Nero?

Emperor Nero was going to die. The senate had ordered his death, and the last remnant of control he had was to claim his death himself. Nero paced back and forth muttering the same words over and over again: "What an artist dies in me."

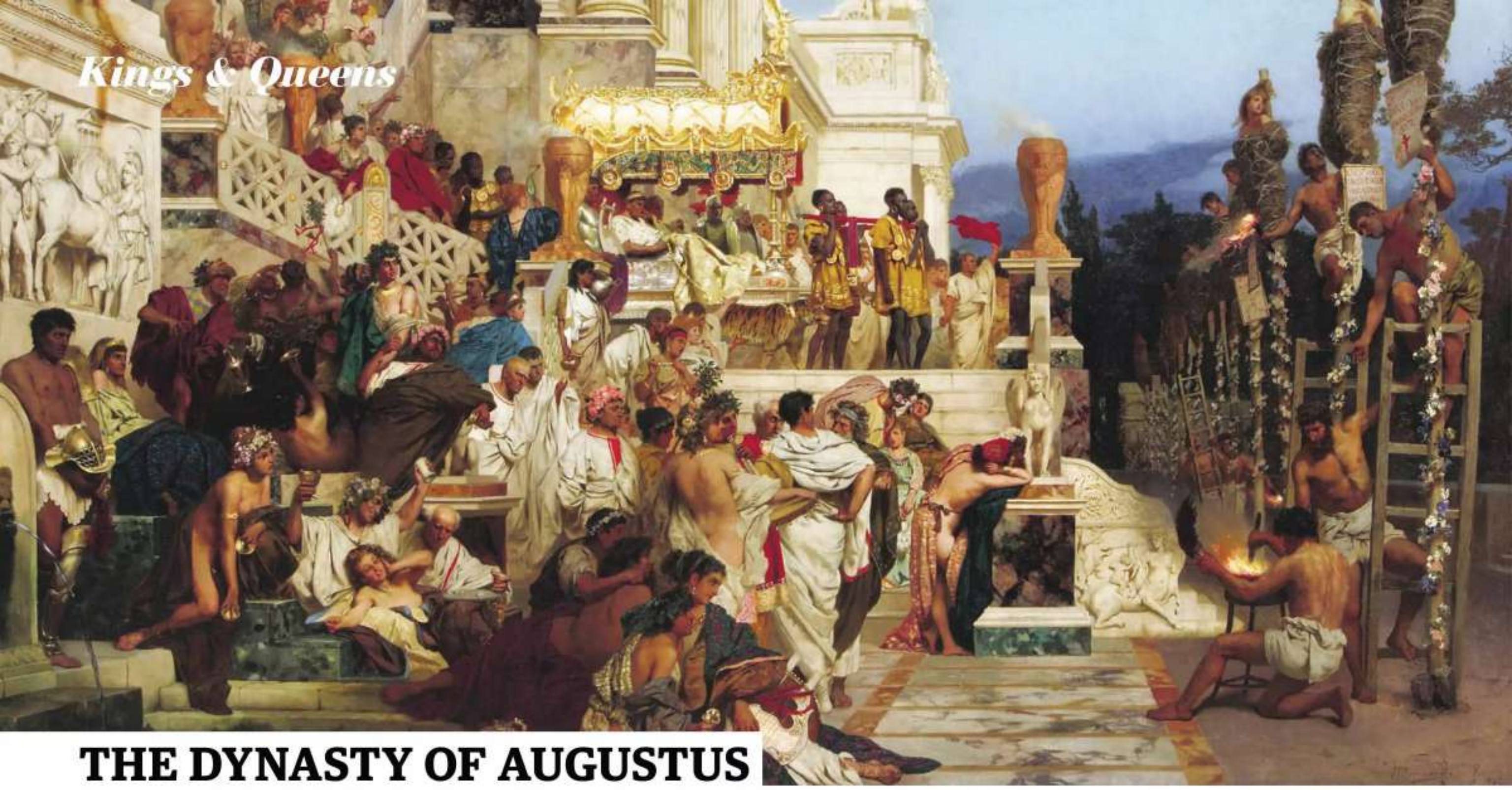
All his friends had abandoned him, and his own dark acts had led him to this spot, to this moment, but still he refused to acknowledge it. He wasn't a ruthless killer, he was just misunderstood - an artist. What a pity for the world to lose such a remarkable artist. In the distance, he heard the rumble of hooves: they were coming for his blood, but he would not give it to them. They had called him greedy, frivolous, self indulgent and now he would be - his blood was his own, not the senate's or the usurpers, and blood was all Emperor Nero had left.

Nero could claim Mark Antony as an ancestor through his father's bloodline and Caligula through his mother's

When Nero was born on 15 December 37 CE, the Julio-Claudian dynasty had been ruling the Roman Empire for more than 50 years. This line, through adoption, could be traced back to the celebrated Julius Caesar himself. Since his death, the man had taken on an almost god-like status, and those 'descended' from him were the only ones deemed worthy to rule the kingdom he had forged. Originally born as Lucius Domitius Ahenbarbus, some believe that Nero was doomed to his later barbaric nature due to his parentage. His father, Gnaeus, was known as a violent man, who had been charged with treason, adultery and incest. It is said that when he was congratulated on the birth of his son, he proclaimed that anything born to he and his wife would be a "disaster".

Gnaeus was dead before Nero would even remember him. Instead, it would be his mother who would play the most influential role in his life, and Gnaeus was right to doubt the purity of his wife. Agrippina was a woman forged in fire - she had lived to see her mother, Agrippina the Elder, and two of her brothers arrested, exiled and starved to death; she had been forced to marry a detestable man she loathed and she had been exiled by her own brother, Caligula. It is no wonder that Agrippina had been forced to turn herself into steel to survive, she was done being passed around like a chess piece - she wanted control, and it started with marrying the emperor Claudius. Agrippina was a sly woman, well versed in the subtleties of the Roman court, and by using her web of political alliances, she was married to Claudius - despite the fact that he was her uncle.

Although Claudius had his own son, Britannicus, he was still young in a society with high mortality rates, so 13-year-old Nero was swiftly made his heir. Agrippina couldn't be emperor herself; she was, after all, a woman. But she could control it so that her own son sat on the throne, and he was just an inexperienced youth who would easily bend to her will. To further solidify her son's position, she had him married to Octavia, Claudius's daughter. However, it wasn't long after this that Claudius began to waver; he seemed to regret marrying Nero to his daughter and started to focus more on his own son, preparing him for the throne. To regain control, Agrippina needed to act quickly. Ancient sources state that she poisoned her husband with a



THE DYNASTY OF AUGUSTUS

I. Julius Caesar
After fighting a bitter civil war against the Senate that wished to rein in the famous general, Caesar was victorious and claimed a position of unrivalled power.

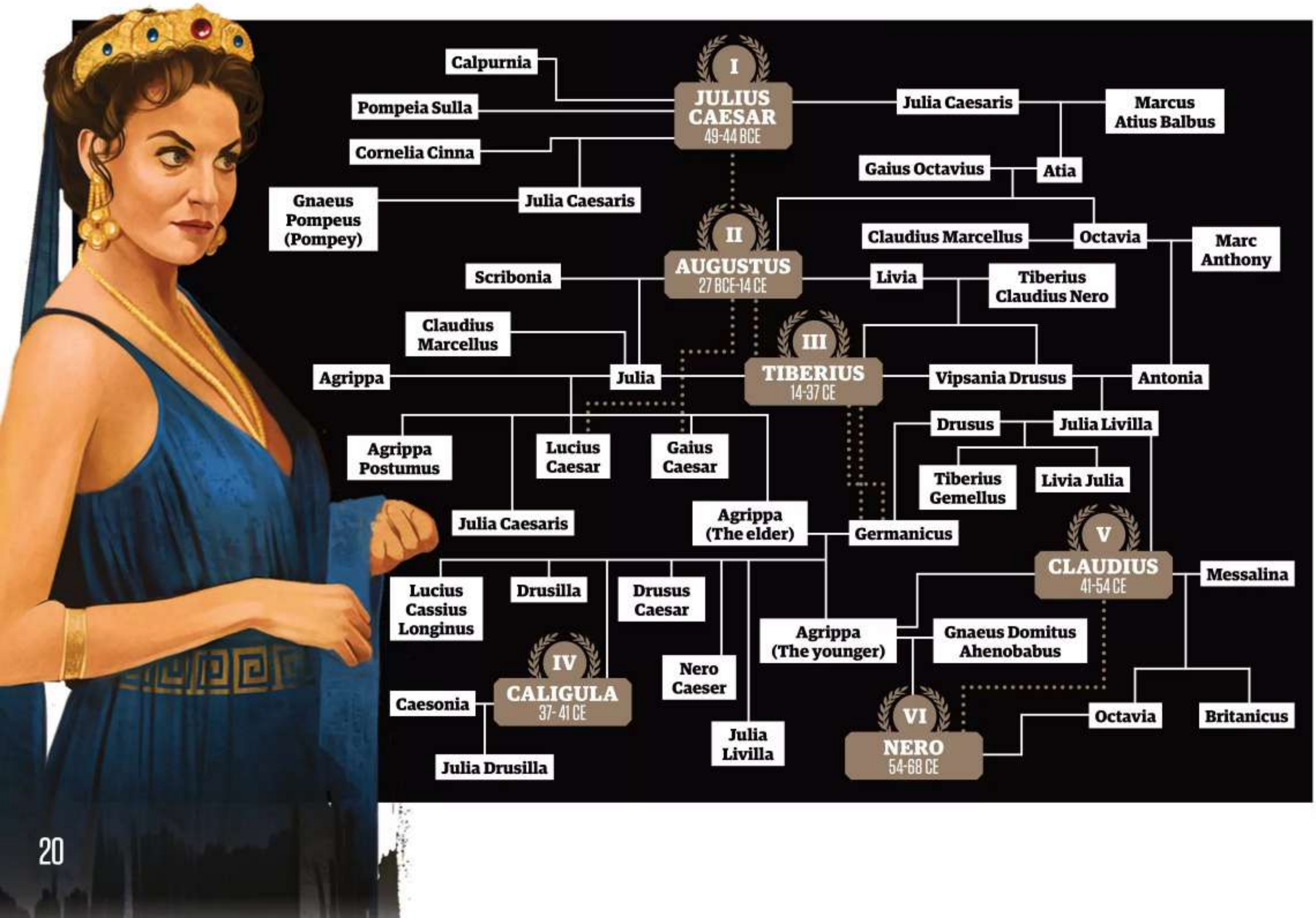
II. Augustus
Caesar declared Augustus, his great-nephew, as his adopted son and heir in his will. He became the empire's first emperor, but in reality he was also a military dictator.

III. Tiberius
Tiberius was not Augustus's biological son. Augustus took him as his adopted son when Tiberius married his daughter, Julia the Elder, in a trend that would continue for 30 years.

IV. Caligula
Part of the newly established Julio-Claudian dynasty, Caligula was the nephew of Tiberius, who became his adopted son and, ultimately, his heir.

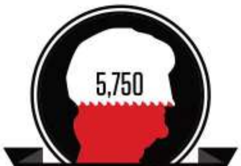
V. Claudius
Claudius was ostracised from his powerful family due to his deafness and limp. However, at Caligula's assassination, he was the last male in his family and thus crowned emperor.

VI. Nero
The final emperor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, Nero was adopted by Claudius, his grand-uncle, to become his heir. Nero was implicated in conspiring Claudius's death.


Calpurnia
I
JULIUS CAESAR
49-44 BCE
Pompeia Sulla
Julia Caesaris
Marcus Atius Balbus
Cornelia Cinna
Gaius Octavius
Atia
Gnaeus Pompeus (Pompey)
Julia Caesaris
Claudius Marcellus
Octavia
Marc Anthony
II
AUGUSTUS
27 BCE-14 CE
Scribonia
Livia
Tiberius Claudius Nero
Claudius Marcellus
III
Agrippa
Julia
TIBERIUS
14-37 CE
Vipsania Drusus
Antonia
Drusus
Julia Livilla
Agrippa Postumus
Lucius Caesar
Gaius Caesar
Tiberius Gemellus
Livia Julia
Julia Caesaris
Agrippa (The elder)
Germanicus
V
CLAUDIUS
41-54 CE
Messalina
Lucius Cassius Longinus
Drusilla
Drusus Caesar
Agrippa (The younger)
Gnaeus Domitus Ahenobabus
IV
CALIGULA
37- 41 CE
Nero Caeser
Caesonia
VI
NERO
54-68 CE
Octavia
Britanicus
Julia Livilla
Julia Drusilla

5 most murderous emperors

The men who ruled Rome with fear, blood and death



NERO

B.15 DEC 37 CE – D.9 JUN 68 CE

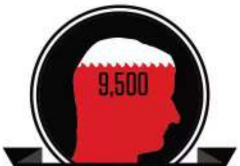
♛ 13 OCT 54 CE – 9 JUN 68 CE

Nero's tyrannical reputation is well earned - not only did he direct his murderous intents towards innocent Christians, beginning a tradition of torture and persecution that would last hundreds of years, but he also killed those closest to him.

NOTABLE MURDER

MOTHER

NAME: AGRIPPINA
REASON: TO STOP HER INTERFERING IN HIS PERSONAL AFFAIRS.
METHOD OF EXECUTION: UNKNOWN BUT IT IS COMMONLY BELIEVED NERO ORDERED ASSASSINS TO DISPOSE OF HER.



TIBERIUS

B.16 NOV 42 BCE – D.16 MAR 37 CE

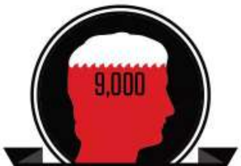
♛ 18 SEP 14 CE – 16 MAR 37 CE

Accounts of Tiberius's murderous streak differ - some sources claim only four innocents died under his reign. However, others paint the picture of a ruthless emperor, killing anyone he suspected of plotting against him, leaving heaps of dead bodies in his wake.

NOTABLE MURDER

STEPSON

NAME: AGRIPPA POSTUMUS
REASON: FOR POSSESSING A STRONG CLAIM TO THE THRONE.
METHOD OF EXECUTION: EXECUTED BY HIS GUARDS: TIBERIUS IS NOT CONFIRMED TO HAVE BEEN BEHIND THE ATTACK.



CALIGULA

B.31 AUG 12 CE – D.24 JAN 41 CE

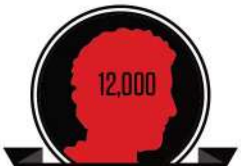
♛ 18 MAR 37 CE – 24 JAN 41 CE

Death surrounded Caligula from an early age, with almost his entire family destroyed by Tiberius. Caligula was known to have an insatiable lust for power. Although we cannot verify them, there are many outrageous stories of murder and tyranny.

NOTABLE MURDER

ADOPTED SON

NAME: TIBERIUS GEMELLUS
REASON: FOR ALLEGEDLY PLOTTING AGAINST CALIGULA.
METHOD OF EXECUTION: EXECUTED BY MILITARY TRIBUNE.



COMMODUS

B.31 AUG 161 – D.31 DEC 192

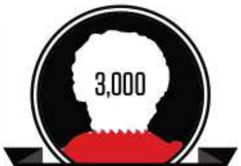
♛ 177 – 31 DEC 192

Rather than being a ruthless tyrant, Commodus is often painted as a figure of cowardice, easily influenced by men with dark intentions. It was repeated attempts upon his life that pushed the emperor to kill for almost no reason at all.

NOTABLE MURDER

SISTER'S LOVER

NAME: MARCUS UMMIDIUS QUADRATUS ANNIANUS
REASON: FOR PLOTTING AGAINST COMMODUS'S REIGN.
METHOD OF EXECUTION: EXECUTED ALONG WITH HIS SON.



SEVERUS

B.11 APR 145 – D.4 FEB 211

♛ 14 APR 193 – 4 FEB 211

Severus claimed the throne through bloody means, deposing the previous emperor and waging war on his rivals. Soon his cruelty became renowned and he earned himself the nickname 'the Punic Sulla' in reference to the infamous dictator, Sulla.

NOTABLE MURDER

PREVIOUS EMPEROR

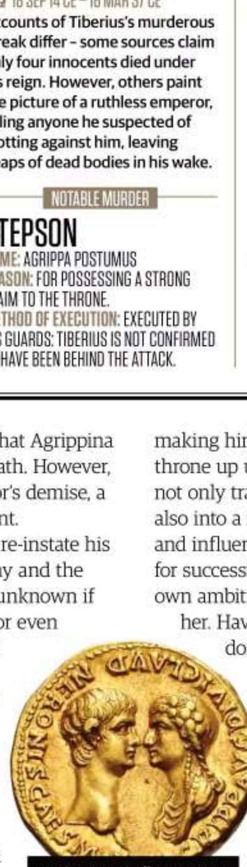
NAME: DIDIUS JULIANUS
REASON: FOR BUYING THE THRONE, SEVERUS REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS AUTHORITY.
METHOD OF EXECUTION: KILLED IN THE PALACE BY A SOLDIER.

plate of mushrooms, others suspect that Agrippina had nothing to do with Claudius's death. However, considering the timing of the emperor's demise, a natural death seems all-too-convenient.

In 54 CE, before he could officially re-instate his own son as heir, Claudius passed away and the position of emperor fell to Nero. It is unknown if Nero played a part in the poisoning, or even if he was privy to the details, but it is peculiar that from then on, Nero proclaimed mushrooms, "the food of the gods."

To the public, Nero was a welcome change. In fact, the early part of his reign was hailed as a 'golden age'. Nero was obsessed with personal popularity - more than anything he wanted to be liked. In his early years he abolished capital punishment, lowered taxes, gave more rights to slaves and gave aid to other cities. He loved the arts and he put on lavish games, concerts, chariot races and tournaments. To the people, it seemed that he was genuinely interested in being a good ruler, but it is likely he was still worried about the ever-looming threat of Claudius's true son claiming the throne. If the people liked him, then it was less likely they would support his rival. To Nero, popularity meant power.

However, things at home were less than stable. Nero was only 17 when he became emperor, making him the youngest ever to assume the throne up until that point. Nero's ascension not only transformed him into an emperor, but also into a man. While his mother's scheming and influence had been useful in the struggle for succession, now he was ruler he had his own ambitions, many of which did not involve her. Having a mother figure so strong and domineering was plainly frustrating to the ambitious young man, and, much to his mother's annoyance, he began to rely more on the advice of his advisers. His adviser's opinions were clear - Agrippina wasn't to be trusted.


Agrippina's influence can be seen from this coin that features her image alongside her son - a very rare occurrence

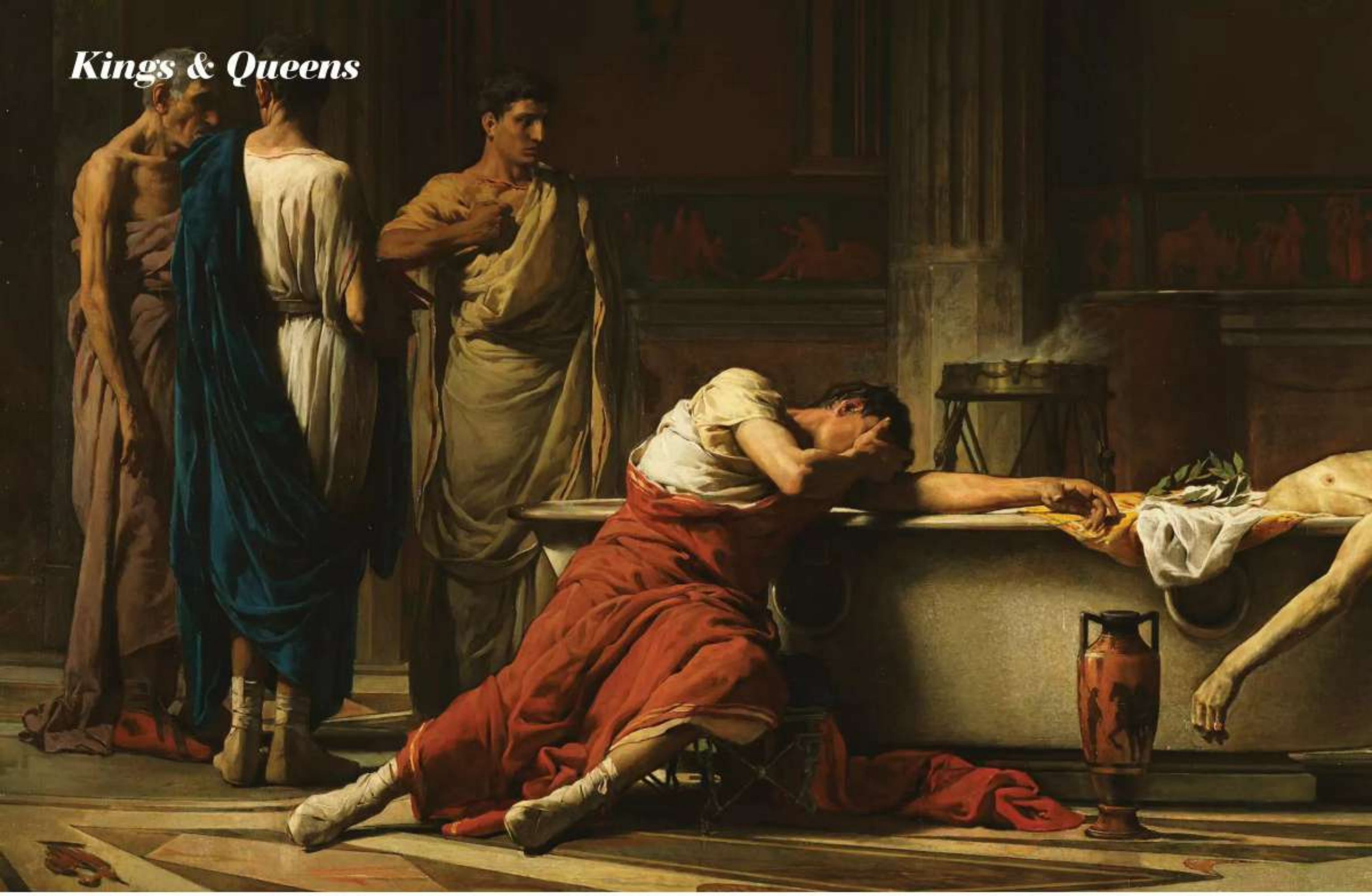
With the relationship souring, Nero purposely began to act out. He had long loathed the political marriage he had been forced into with Octavia and instead began an affair with a former slave. When his outraged mother found out and demanded he rid himself of her, Nero instead began living with her as his wife. It was a very unsubtle message - Nero wasn't a child anymore, and his mother didn't control him. Nero swiftly moved Agrippina out of the palace, denied her the protection of the Praetorian Guard and banned her from the gladiatorial contests.

Agrippina, however, wasn't one to go down quietly. Finally realising that she had completely lost grip on a son who had inherited her own ruthless ambition, she turned her attention elsewhere, to the one other person who could claim the throne and reinstate her power - Britannicus. He was still a minor, but suddenly, in 55 CE, the day before he was due to be declared an adult, Claudius's true son died while at a banquet. Agrippina had taught her son two things: how to succeed, and how to kill - and now he was a master of both.

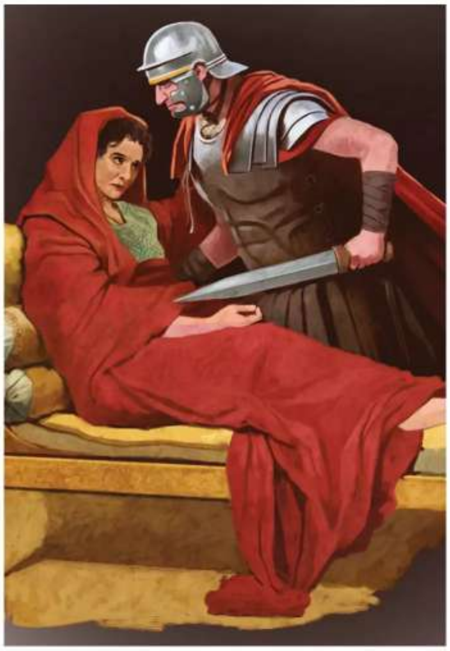
In 58 CE, Nero finally decided he was finished with his loveless marriage and declared his wish to marry another - Poppaea Sabina. However, his mother refused to stay quiet and let her opposition to the divorce be heard clearly among the Roman population, who also did not wish Nero to divorce Octavia. Feeling his support waning and finally pushed to breaking point, Nero made a decision - it was time to rid himself of his interfering mother once and for all.

Nero's decision to kill his mother was not a sudden, rash one. It was thought out and planned down to the last detail. At first he had experts craft a device that could be affixed to her ceiling and would then crush her in her sleep. When that proved too complicated, he opted for a boat made to sink. However, Agrippina escaped by swimming to the shore. Finally, out of options, he returned to tradition and had her stabbed to death.

Shortly after Agrippina's murder, Nero began to change. Perhaps it was something to do with murdering his own mother that haunted his mind.



"The same man who had abolished capital punishment began executing anyone who he suspected of conspiring against him"



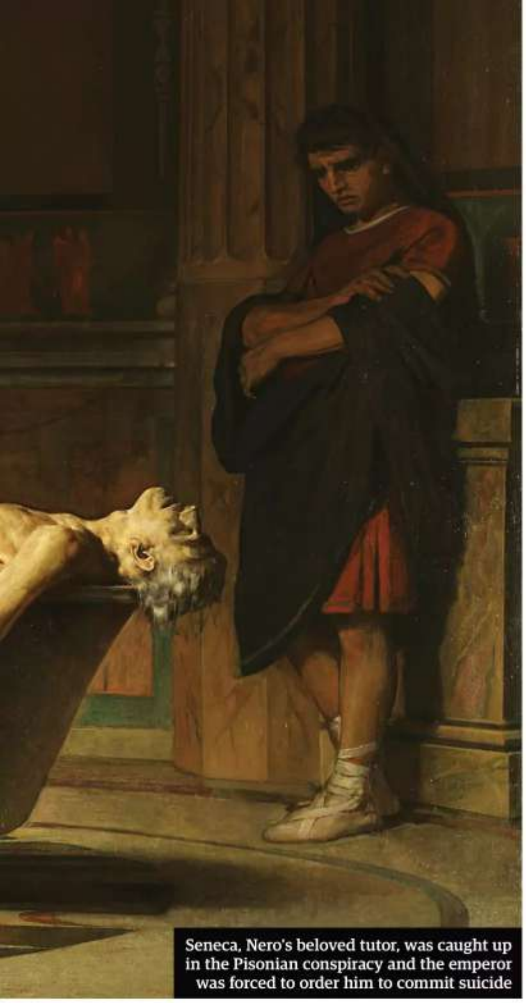
Whether it was guilt or something animal within him being unleashed, the kind, fair ruler that the people loved seemed to vanish almost overnight. Nero had always been self-indulgent, but his hedonistic lifestyle became so over the top that it began to sicken the very people who had once loved him.

He spent an outrageous amount of money on himself and his artistic pursuits and began to give public performances, an action criticised as shameful by many ancient historians. He forbade anyone from leaving while he performed, and some likely inflated accounts write of women giving birth in the arena and men flinging themselves off the high walls to escape the boredom. If Nero had simply been a hedonistic ruler, that would not have been so terrible. He had always been lavish and craved the people's attention, but now he was cruel too. This cruelty was directed at the woman he likely viewed as the last thorn in his side - his wife.

With nobody to oppose him, Nero divorced the nation's darling, Octavia, and banished her on grounds of infertility. This left him free to marry Poppaea, by that point heavily pregnant. Eventually Nero bowed to public protests and let Octavia return, but not for long. Officially her death was deemed a suicide, but the truth was a badly kept secret: Nero had ordered her execution. Her popularity was turning the public against him, therefore she had to be eliminated. As the people wept, the emperor had her head sent to his new wife as a gift.

The people of Rome were not idiots, and the sudden death of Octavia and swift remarriage had made many people suspect Nero's hidden murderous ways. Accusations of treason against the emperor began to emerge, but rather than heed this warning and lay low, he instead became more vicious than ever. The same man who had abolished capital punishment began executing anyone who he suspected of conspiring against him. Eventually this cull extended to people who said any bad word about him; one commander was even executed for making a negative comment at a party. It is said that Nero was haunted by memories of his mother and wife, and the guilt transformed him into a bloodthirsty animal, killing without moderation or consideration. Although his murderous actions could be chalked up to rage and suspicion, it did mean one thing - Nero's rivals were eliminated one by one.

Nero seemed to have decided that if he couldn't have power by popularity, then he would have power by dominance. Over this period, he slowly usurped authority from the Senate. Just ten years after promising them power equivalent to that they had held under the republic, Nero had all but



Seneca, Nero's beloved tutor, was caught up in the Pisonian conspiracy and the emperor was forced to order him to commit suicide

stripped the Senate of their worth. To the emperor, this meant more power for him, but the Senate was also full of dangerous, ambitious men, and ignoring them would later prove his downfall.

In 64 CE, something even more devastating than Nero's rage distracted the Roman public. A great fire consumed the city, destroying three districts, damaging seven and leaving thousands of citizens homeless. Accidental fires were not uncommon at the time, but a rumour soon sprung up that it was Nero himself who had started it in order to clear space for his new luxury complex, the Domus Aurea. Although it is impossible to confirm who ignited the fire, the fact that his subjects all believed Nero capable of starting it to benefit himself is indicative of how far the beloved emperor had fallen. Nero was quick to shift the blame, pointing the fingers at Christians, and in doing so began years of torture and persecution. Across Rome, Christians were arrested, devoured by dogs, crucified and burned. There are even accounts of Nero using oil-soaked Christians as torches in his gardens.

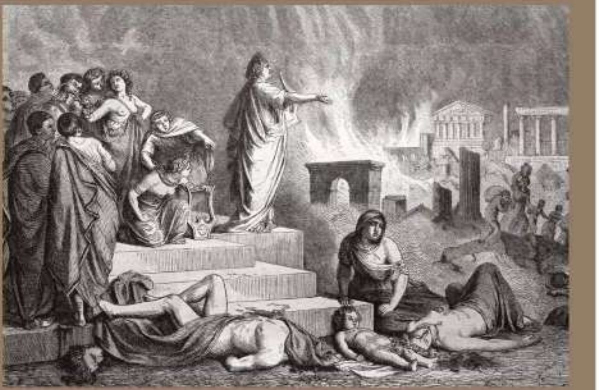
The public had been right about one thing: Nero did want to build his huge villa, and the newly cleared land made the perfect spot. However, after excessively spending on his own artistic pursuits, the emperor was running low on funds. In order to pay for his ambitious building project, he sold senior positions in public office to the highest bidders, raised taxes and took money from temples. Nero's frivolous spending had caused the currency to devalue for the first time in the empire's history, and to try to rebuild his funds, he reinstated a policy that allowed him to confiscate property from those suspected of treason.

For many people, this was the final straw. In 65 CE, a plot was hatched to assassinate Nero and place Piso, an aristocrat, in his place. However, the plot was discovered before it could be carried out. Many of the men involved in the plot were Nero's previous advisers and close friends, but Nero showed no restraint in having them all executed. Killing his enemies had worked very well for Nero so far, but that was when he only had a few rivals. Now almost all of Rome hated him, and he couldn't kill everyone.

Three years later, Gaius Julius Vindex, a governor, publicly rebelled against Nero's harsh tax policies. He was swiftly joined by another governor, Servius Sulpicius Galba. Although Gaius's forces were squashed and Gaius executed, Galba still lived, and as the main living force against Nero,

Did Nero start the Great Fire?

Expert bio: Miriam Griffin studied at Barnard College, New York, and at St Anne's College, Oxford, where she read Greats. She served as tutorial fellow in Ancient History at Somerville College for 35 years until 2002. After retirement, she edited *The Classical Quarterly*. In 2008, Griffin was Langford Eminent Scholar at Florida State University. She is the author of books on Seneca and Nero, and has written extensively on Roman philosophy.

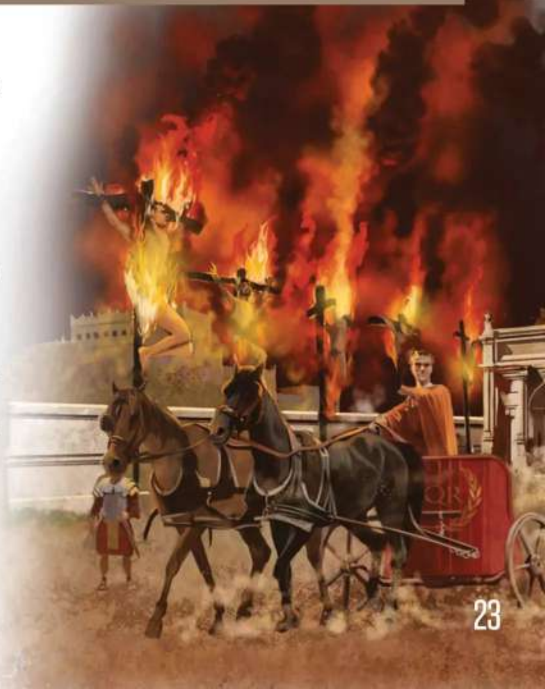


Was Nero responsible for the Great Fire?

The rumour of Nero's responsibility for the fire of 64 CE goes back to his reign, for one of those who conspired against him a year later, when interrogated, reproached him with it. In fact, the rumour is contemporary with the event, if the historian Tacitus is right to say that it was in order to abolish that rumour that Nero tried to pin the blame on the Christians. Rome had frequent fires, but this one was clearly exceptional: it lasted six days, plus a resurgence of another three days, and damaged more than two-thirds of the city's districts. The Emperor Domitian was to have altars to Neptune built along the edge of the affected area. Arson is unlikely to be the cause, as the Moon was full on 17 July 64 CE, two days after the fire, making the date a bad choice, since men with torches would have been easily visible. Arson by Nero is particularly unlikely as the fire did not start or even restart in the area used for the Golden House, and the flames damaged Nero's new apartments on the Palatine and Oppian Hills, which he clearly still liked as he stripped off the marble wall decoration for use in his new palace.

Was Nero truly as monstrous as history has painted him?

Half a century after his death, a Greek writer said, "Even now his subjects wish he was still alive and most men believe that he is." False Neros in fact appeared in 69 CE, 79 CE and 88-89 CE, all young and all playing the lyre. This was in the east where Nero had performed at all the major festivals, showing his approval of Greek artistic appreciation. Rome and Italy did not share the idea that members of the governing elite should be artistic, so that neither Nero's performances, nor even his patronage of the arts, could reduce the hostility he generated there by his extravagance and cruelty. Yet there endured a tradition that the first part of his reign, the Quinquennium Neronis, was a good period. He had good advisers who tried to steer him in the right direction, as is shown by the dedication to him in 55 CE of a work on clemency by one of them, the philosopher Seneca. But Nero had already murdered his adoptive brother Britannicus and his mother Agrippina by 62 CE when his other adviser, Burrus, died, seriously reducing Seneca's influence over his pupil who proceeded to rid himself of any remaining rivals and their relatives. It has not helped Nero's reputation that his death marked the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, enabling the new rulers to justify their seizure of power by claiming to replace an evil tyrant.

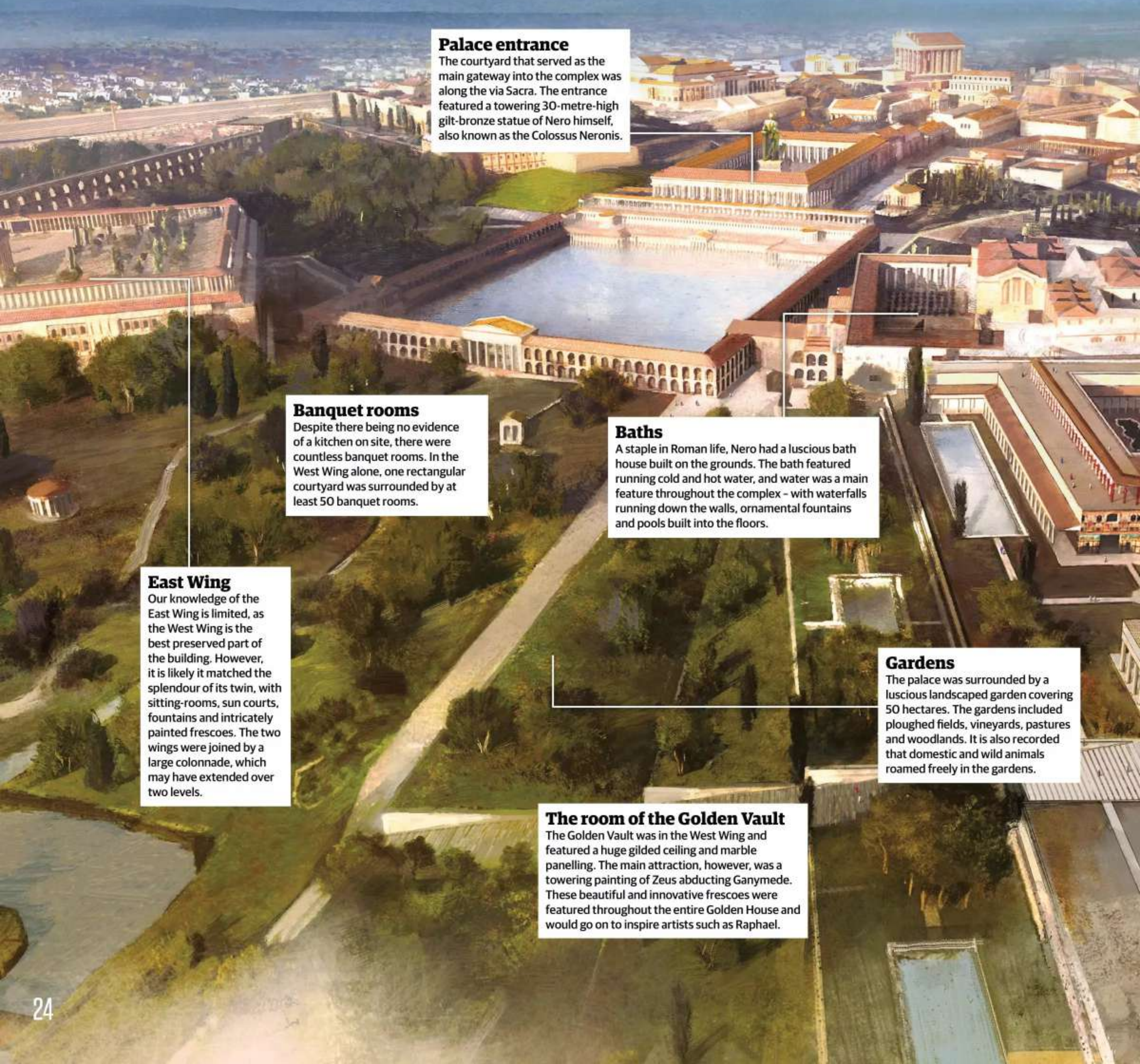


The Domus Aurea

Nero's self indulgence is no well kept secret, the emperor did not shrink at the idea of spending enormous amounts on himself while his subjects suffered. After the great fire of 64 CE destroyed vast areas of land, Nero saw an opportunity to build the grandest palace the world had ever seen. Nero seized this land, actually owned by several aristocrats, and set about building his dream home - the Domus Aurea or 'Golden House'.

Enlisting the help of the celebrated architect Severus and the engineer Celer, Nero created a pleasure palace unlike any seen before. The vast complex included landscaped gardens, a huge man-made lake and an imperial retreat with 150 beautifully decorated rooms. Glimmering with delicate gold leaf, semi-precious stones and ivory, upon the project's completion Nero proclaimed, "Now I can begin to live like a human being."

After Nero's suicide just four years later, the lake was drained and vast areas of the palace were torn down by Vespasian, who also began constructing the Colosseum where the lake had stood. Baths were also later built on the land. It wasn't until the Renaissance that interest surrounding the remains was renewed - many famous painters explored the ruins, marvelled at the beauty and were inspired in their own work.



Palace entrance
The courtyard that served as the main gateway into the complex was along the via Sacra. The entrance featured a towering 30-metre-high gilt-bronze statue of Nero himself, also known as the Colossus Neronis.

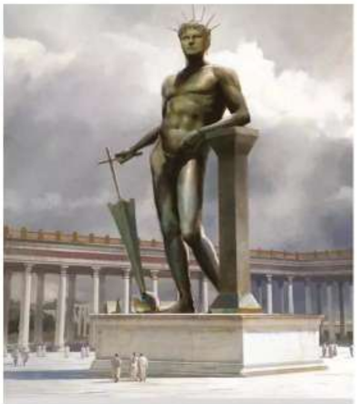
Banquet rooms
Despite there being no evidence of a kitchen on site, there were countless banquet rooms. In the West Wing alone, one rectangular courtyard was surrounded by at least 50 banquet rooms.

Baths
A staple in Roman life, Nero had a luscious bath house built on the grounds. The bath featured running cold and hot water, and water was a main feature throughout the complex - with waterfalls running down the walls, ornamental fountains and pools built into the floors.

East Wing
Our knowledge of the East Wing is limited, as the West Wing is the best preserved part of the building. However, it is likely it matched the splendour of its twin, with sitting-rooms, sun courts, fountains and intricately painted frescoes. The two wings were joined by a large colonnade, which may have extended over two levels.

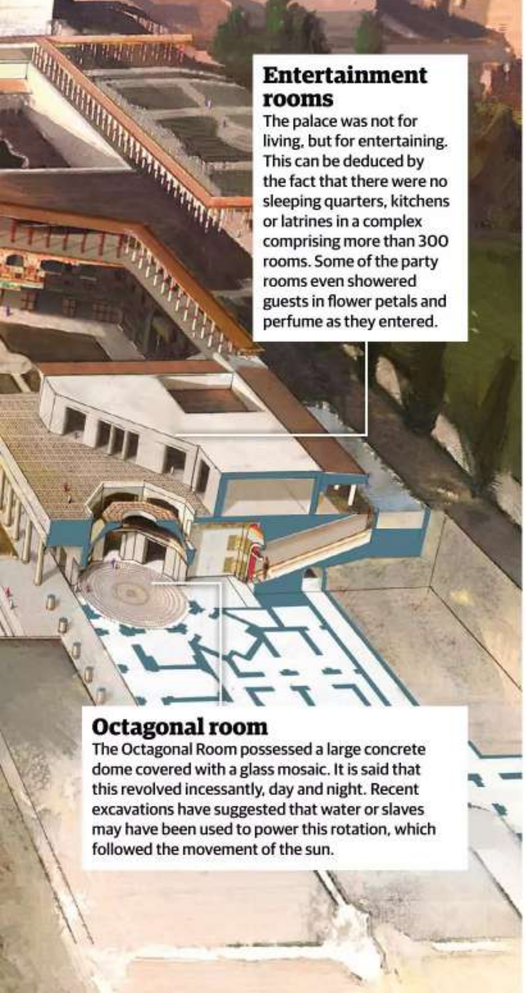
Gardens
The palace was surrounded by a luscious landscaped garden covering 50 hectares. The gardens included ploughed fields, vineyards, pastures and woodlands. It is also recorded that domestic and wild animals roamed freely in the gardens.

The room of the Golden Vault
The Golden Vault was in the West Wing and featured a huge gilded ceiling and marble panelling. The main attraction, however, was a towering painting of Zeus abducting Ganymede. These beautiful and innovative frescoes were featured throughout the entire Golden House and would go on to inspire artists such as Raphael.



The Colossus of Nero

When Nero was building his Domus Aurea, he decided its crowning glory would be a huge, imposing bronze statue of himself. Designed by the Greek architect Zenodorus, this mammoth work of art took four years to construct. Sources differ on the statue's true height, but we can presume it was at least 30 metres tall. After Nero's death, with public opinion of the emperor at an all time low, the statue was moved next to the Colosseum and Nero's face was replaced with that of the sun god. Emperor Commodus later altered it to his own face until, after his death, it was changed back. Today nothing remains of this sculpture except for its foundations.

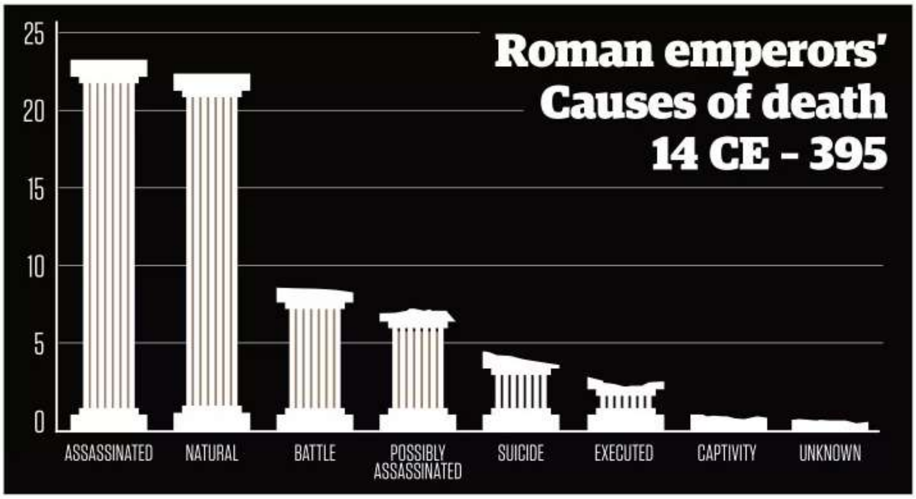


Entertainment rooms

The palace was not for living, but for entertaining. This can be deduced by the fact that there were no sleeping quarters, kitchens or latrines in a complex comprising more than 300 rooms. Some of the party rooms even showered guests in flower petals and perfume as they entered.

Octagonal room

The Octagonal Room possessed a large concrete dome covered with a glass mosaic. It is said that this revolved incessantly, day and night. Recent excavations have suggested that water or slaves may have been used to power this rotation, which followed the movement of the sun.



he quickly gained support. Nero declared him a public enemy, but this seemed only to increase his follower numbers. Even the prefect of Nero's Praetorian Guard abandoned him and declared his allegiance to Galba. Many men who had likely been too scared to act alone saw this as their chance to finally raise their voices against the emperor and his greedy, ruthless ways, and Galba's support grew and grew.

Nero was self indulgent and tyrannical, but he wasn't stupid. He knew it was time to run. He decided to flee east to the provinces that were still loyal to him. However, even his own officers refused to help him, quoting a line from Vergil's *Aeneid*: "Is it so dreadful a thing then to die?" Escape was too good for Nero. Disgrace was too kind to the man who had slaughtered and destroyed the lives of his people. Death was what the Roman people, and his own men, craved.

Nero's name was erased from monuments and many portraits were reworked to represent someome else

Nero had no option but to return home to his palace, his last place of sanctuary. However, he struggled to sleep, and when he awoke, he found that the palace guard had also abandoned him. Anxious and panic stricken, he sent hasty messages to his friends' chambers, but no replies came. Even they had forsaken him. Nero had lost everything - his safety, his kingdom and his cherished popularity. He called for anyone adept with a sword to come and end his life, but nobody appeared, and his cries echoed in his empty palace: "Have I neither friend nor foe?"

The emperor managed to escape to a villa six kilometres outside the city with four loyal freedmen, where he ordered them to dig a grave for him. Before it was finished, a message arrived - Nero had been declared a public enemy and the Senate were to execute him by beating. It is unlikely that this would have occurred; there was, after all, still some devotion to the Julio-Claudian family, of which Nero was the last in line. If there was no loyalty to Nero, the bloodline at least would give him a chance of survival.

Nero, however, did not see this. He had been abandoned by everyone, he had lost everything, and he was convinced his life was next. First he begged one of his companions to kill him, an act they refused to comply with, and then, upon hearing the horsemen approaching, he had no option but to take his own life. Even here he failed; consumed by fear, he forced his secretary to do the deed for him. Nero still lived as the horsemen entered, and he survived long enough to utter his last words as the men struggled to stop the bleeding: "Too late! This is fidelity!" On 9 June 68 CE, on the anniversary of Octavia's death, the last in the Julio-Claudian line was dead.

By the time he reached Rome, Galba had already been proclaimed emperor. As favoured as he was, Galba's reign would not be a long or peaceful one and he would be dead within a year. Nero had not been a good emperor, but with his ancient line dried up, chaos claimed the city and war waged. Nero's legacy, however, would live on for millenia. To Christians he became a figure so rooted in pain and anguish that he took on the form of the Antichrist. A rumour began that Nero had not died at all and instead would one day return. This became a legend almost Christ-like in its retelling, surviving hundreds of years after his death, even into the 5th century, and at least three imposters proclaiming to be Nero led unsuccessful rebellions in his name. Because of these things and the influence they had on historians, it is almost impossible to distinguish who Nero really was from rumour and myth. Today he has taken on a super-villain status that increases with every retelling of his life. The real man behind the myth may be dead forever, but the spectre of Emperor Nero, and the pain he brought his people, flourishes to this day.

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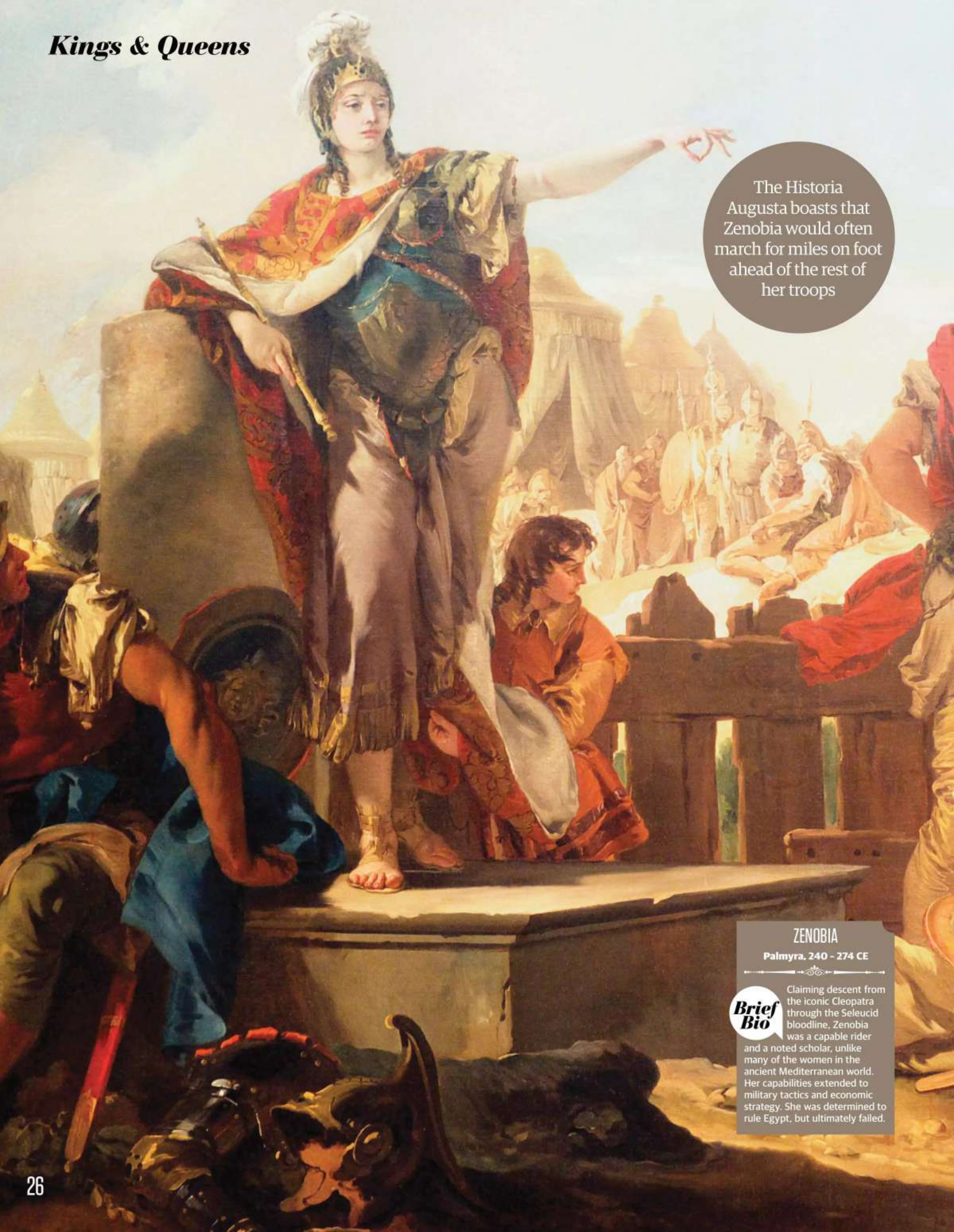


The Historia Augusta boasts that Zenobia would often march for miles on foot ahead of the rest of her troops

ZENOBIA

Palmyra, 240 - 274 CE

Brief Bio

Claiming descent from the iconic Cleopatra through the Seleucid bloodline, Zenobia was a capable rider and a noted scholar, unlike many of the women in the ancient Mediterranean world. Her capabilities extended to military tactics and economic strategy. She was determined to rule Egypt, but ultimately failed.

c. 267 – 272 CE

Zenobia

Armed with the bravery and beauty of her ancestor Cleopatra, Zenobia defied the Romans to rule her own empire in the Middle East

Blame William Shakespeare – or Elizabeth Taylor – for the fact that Cleopatra has overshadowed all other strong, cunning and comely queens of antiquity. Three centuries after the legendary Cleopatra ruled from the Pharaoh's throne in Egypt, her blood heiress, as well as equal in courage and beauty, rose to power in the eastern oasis of Palmyra, in modern-day Syria. After the assassination of her war-hero husband, Zenobia assumed confident control of this wealthy city state on the fringes of the fading Roman Empire in the 3rd century CE. Claiming independence from Rome, she would drive her loyal armies across Egypt and Palestine, briefly ruling a large and stable empire of her own. But her kingdom, and life, would ultimately be cut short by the sword of the conquering Roman Emperor Aurelian.

The true story of Zenobia is shrouded in centuries of legend. The earliest historical source is the wildly unreliable *Historia Augusta*, a colourful work of fiction posing as fact from the 4th century CE. The 18th century historian Edward Gibbon, in his monumental work *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, relied heavily on descriptions of Zenobia found in the *Historia Augusta* to paint his own romanticised portrait of the Palmyrene queen.

"Modern Europe has produced several illustrious women who have sustained with glory the weight of empire," wrote Gibbon. "But... Zenobia is perhaps the only female whose superior genius broke through the servile indolence imposed on her sex by the climate and manners of Asia. She claimed her descent from the Macedonian kings of Egypt, equalled in beauty her ancestor Cleopatra and far surpassed that princess in chastity and valour. Zenobia was esteemed the most lovely as well as the most heroic of her sex."

Modern historians have pieced together a more reliable biography of Zenobia from early Christian sources, archaeological inscriptions and ancient coins, but much of her life story is still up for debate, starting with her lineage and ethnicity. Much is made of Zenobia's claimed relation to Cleopatra along the famed Seleucid bloodline on her mother's side. Her father also ruled Palmyra and was descended from a long line of Roman citizens, as well as royalty dating back to Julia Domna, the influential empress wife of Roman Emperor Lucius Septimus Severus.

Whether or not either of these genealogies are true, it's clear that Zenobia was born into a wealthy and powerful family in a city state at the height of its own wealth and power. Palmyra is located in the middle of the desert halfway between the Euphrates River valley and the Mediterranean Sea.

Underground springs transformed the land into a fertile oasis and a critical stop on the Silk Road trade route that brought spices and textiles from the exotic East to the bustling markets of Rome. Palmyra's security forces offered protection to passing caravans while the government exacted an import tax – 25 per cent of every camel load – to fill Palmyra's substantial coffers.

Zenobia, as described by Gibbon, was an olive-skinned beauty who spoke Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Arabic and Ancient Egyptian. Unlike the delicate noblewomen of Rome – who wouldn't leave the house without a protective veil and covered carriage – Zenobia was a capable camel and horse rider who enjoyed wild lion and panther hunts as much as her husband.

> Tracing her ancestry, historians now believe that Zenobia may have had Aramaean or even Jewish origins

Aurelian the unstoppable

After the Imperial Crisis of the 3rd century, the Roman Empire owed its survival to the hard-nosed military mastermind Aurelian. Born into a family of humble peasant farmers in the Danubian provinces of the Roman Empire near the Balkans, he joined a long line of tough and disciplined military men. Aurelian rose to prominence as a strict and stalwart army officer during one of the messiest periods in Imperial history. In 268, the Emperor Gallienus was under fire from the so-called Thirty Tyrants, Roman military and political leaders who aimed to topple the throne. Aurelian, along with his compatriot Claudius, put down the rebellion, but may have played a role in Gallienus' assassination. Claudius succeeded as Emperor, but died after only 18 months, making room for no-nonsense Aurelian to assume the crown. He whipped the Roman legions into shape and marched them on the barbarian marauders – groups such as the Goths, Vandals, Alemanni and Juthungi – threatening Roman sovereignty in northern Italy. By this point, Zenobia had established herself as the Queen of the East and ruler of the independent Palmyrene Empire. If Aurelian had any hesitation about crushing a woman, he didn't show it, and brought the full force of his best legions against Zenobia, finally offering her a measure of mercy if she would surrender her empire at the gates of Palmyra. When she refused, Aurelian dragged her captive to Rome and had her entire inner circle executed. He returned two years later during a short-lived revolt.

Zenobia was the second wife of Odaenathus, the ruler of Palmyra and a critical ally of Rome in the east. During Odaenathus' rule, Palmyra was an important buffer state between the Romans and the Persian Sasanian Empire. Rome allowed Palmyra to remain independent in exchange for its strategic neutrality in the region. In 260 CE, the Persians captured the Roman Emperor Valerian and conquered the eastern Roman stronghold of Antioch. Fearing a Persian expansion towards Palmyra, Odaenathus struck first, decimating the Persian army as it returned victorious from Antioch. Later Palmyrene campaigns pushed the Persians all the way back to their capital. These victories won Odaenathus praise and titles from Rome and may have triggered visions of his own future rise to be Emperor himself.

Odaenathus would not live long enough to find out. He was murdered by a nephew along with his son Hairan, from his first wife, over a hunting argument. Odaenathus' death left Zenobia's young son Vaballathus as heir to the throne. Since the boy was too young to rule – between five and ten years old – Zenobia assumed the role of regent, a position that quickly evolved into the undisputed political and military leader of Palmyra. On coins recovered from the years after Odaenathus' murder, archaeologists first find them with Vaballathus' face on the front and Zenobia's on the back. Very quickly these positions are reversed.

Zenobia's chief counsellor, Cassius Longinus, was a noted scholar, Platonic philosopher, as well as a literary critic

As the de facto ruler of Palmyra, Zenobia picked up exactly where her husband left off, with her own dreams of a Palmyrene Empire. Historians argue about Zenobia's specific motivations and political calculations. During the 3rd century, the Roman Empire suffered an extended period of great tribulation known as the Imperial Crisis. The Empire had gone through 19 emperors in 30 years, most of them killed by ambitious generals or their own Praetorian Guard. Britain and Gaul had split from the Empire, the Goths were invading from the north, there was a smallpox epidemic in the provinces and pirates were disrupting trade along the Libyan coast.

In Rome's moment of weakness, Zenobia saw an opportunity, but did she see herself as Rome's partner in empire, or its conqueror?

What happens next is undisputed. In the year 269 CE, with the support of her husband's battle-tested General Zabdas, Zenobia marched the Palmyrene army into Egypt, what she called her ancestral homeland. When the Roman prefect of Egypt objected to Zenobia's occupation, she swiftly had him beheaded. Zenobia bestowed upon herself the title of Queen of Egypt and commissioned a ten-volume history of Cleopatra to commemorate the victory. If the Roman Emperor Claudius had his

"When the Roman prefect of Egypt objected to Zenobia's occupation, she swiftly had him beheaded"

Defining moment

Assassination of Odaenathus

266 CE

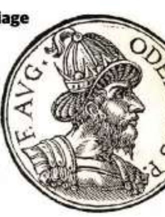
Zenobia's husband, Odaenathus, died far from the battlefield. One story sees him going on a hunting trip with a rude nephew, Maeonius, who Odaenathus punished by taking away his horse and locking him up for a few nights. Insulted, young Maeonius killed the Palmyrene king at a party. Other accounts implicate Rome in the murder. Another story puts Zenobia herself at the centre of the plot. Odaenathus was killed along with his eldest son, putting the throne in the hands of Zenobia's son Vaballathus and under her capable control.

Timeline

240 CE

A Queen is born
Cleopatra claimed to be descended from Isis and Zenobia hitched her own star to Cleopatra's. She was born into the ruling family of Palmyra and schooled in language, philosophy, horse riding and hunting.
240 CE

Her match in marriage
Zenobia became the second wife of Odaenathus, whose bravery and cunning on the battlefield were a perfect match for his ambitious young warrior bride.
258 CE


ODENATVS P. F. AVG.

An heir in waiting
Zenobia bore Odaenathus a son, Vaballathus, but the direct heir to the Palmyrene throne was Hairan, a child by Odaenathus' first wife. In Zenobia's day, it was common for competing wives to jostle – or even kill – to get their son on the throne.
259 CE

Taking Egypt
Zenobia and her trusted general marched uncontested into Egypt while Rome's military was busy fighting off Goth invaders and Libyan pirates. The Egyptian people embraced Zenobia as the rightful heir to Cleopatra's greatness.
269 CE

own objections, he was too busy fighting off the Goths to worry about the upstart empress in Egypt.

Without Roman resistance, Zenobia the warrior queen was given free rein to extend her territory into Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. At its greatest extent, Zenobia's empire stretched from the Nile River in the south up through the Sinai Peninsula and Palestine, north to the Black Sea and west to modern-day Ankara, Turkey. Around this time, Zenobia changed her coins yet again to add the title Augustus, or empress, alongside her own portrait.

In 270, a new face appeared on the scene in the form of Aurelian, a lifelong military man who rose to the ranks to become Emperor of Rome and Restitutor Orbis, or restorer of the world. Aurelian brought order and discipline back to the Roman military. He pushed out invading Germanic tribes such as the Vandals from northern Italy and erected the fortress-like Aurelian Walls around Rome. Next he marched against the Goths in the Balkans and crushed them. By 272, Aurelian had dealt with Rome's most pressing problems and was ready to turn his attention east to the so-called Palmyrene Empire and its warrior empress. The *Historia Augusta* relates Zenobia writing a letter to Aurelian proposing that they rule the Mediterranean as co-emperors. If that letter ever actually existed, then Aurelian likely ignored it.

> Zenobia's rule of Palmyra, including her rebellious campaign against the Roman Empire, lasted less than five years

Aurelian and Zenobia first met in battle at Antioch. Zenobia's forces were anchored by heavily armoured cavalry called clibanarii, using a style of warfare borrowed from the Persians. Both horses and riders were covered with thick armoured plates to withstand a line of Roman archers known as sagittariorum. The clibanarii had a weakness, though, and Aurelian exploited it brilliantly. In Latin, clibanarii means the camp oven-bearers, because the armoured suits heat up like a furnace in the midday Sun. Aurelian feinted retreat and lead the cavalry on lengthy chases, timing his greatest offensive to coincide with the greatest heat of the day. Zenobia's overheated cavalry were no match for Aurelian's well-trained legions and Zenobia retreated to Emissa, modern-day Homs.

Aurelian attacked Zenobia again at Emissa, using Palestinian slingers – armed with rocks and slings, like young David who fought Goliath – to disrupt and confuse the Palmyrene cavalry. At one point, the 70,000-strong cavalry turned in on itself, trampling its own horsemen in the chaos. Zenobia was right there alongside her troops. "In both [battles] the Queen of Palmyra animated the armies by her presence," Gibbon writes. Facing defeat at Emissa, however, Zenobia decided to flee to the stronghold of Palmyra on her speediest camel.

Back in Palmyra, Zenobia failed to gather enough forces to engage in conventional warfare. Aurelian laid siege to the city for months, which, according to Gibbon, drew criticism from Rome.

In *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon quotes a letter from Aurelian: "The Roman people speak with contempt of the war that I am waging against a woman. They're ignorant both of the character and of the power of Zenobia. It's impossible to enumerate her warlike preparations, of stones, of arrows and every species of missile weapons. Every part of the wall is provided with two or three ballistae and artificial fires are thrown from her military engines. The fear of punishment has armed her with courage."

In the end, the gods favoured Rome, Palmyra swiftly fell and Zenobia, along with her son and heir, was captured. The *Historia Augusta* recalls Zenobia being paraded through the streets of Rome in golden chains. Other accounts say she died on the journey from Palmyra, while others still claim she committed suicide – like her tragic heroine Cleopatra – rather than suffer the indignity of submitting to the Emperor or facing the jeering Roman crowds.

Defining moment

Siege of Palmyra

274 CE

According to exaggerated accounts in the *Historia Augusta*, Aurelian's final offensive against Zenobia at the desert oasis of Palmyra was almost a failure. As the Roman legions marched from Emessa, they were hounded by Syrian robbers and target practise for Persian assassins. His troops exhausted from two massive battles, Aurelian attempted to strike a deal with Zenobia, promising her life and the freedom of her people in return for peaceful surrender. Zenobia said that she, like Cleopatra, preferred death to dishonour. She threatened Aurelian with talk of reinforcements from Persia. Aurelian surrounded and starved out the city, bringing Palmyra to its knees.

Life in the time of Zenobia

Stealing from Rome's own breadbasket

Rome supplied free rations of wheat to its citizens to win their political loyalty, but much of the wheat was imported from Egypt. When Zenobia conquered Egypt, she allegedly cut off the wheat supply, a tactic not unlike kicking a hornet's nest.

By name only

The wealthy city state of Palmyra held a unique position in the Roman Empire. It functioned as an independent colony, free to collect its own taxes, but privy to the protection of the emperor. Palmyra grew fat off the taxes levied on caravans travelling the Silk Road to the west.

Spice security

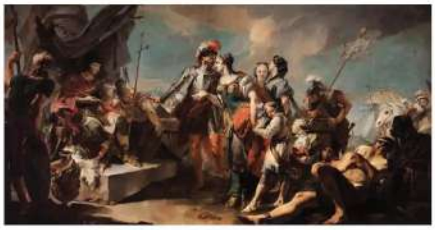
As a critical stop on the Silk Road, Palmyra was responsible for protecting the silk and spice caravans along the stretch of road within its boundaries. The task fell to private armies of swift horsemen that earned a reputation for their prowess at repelling bandits.

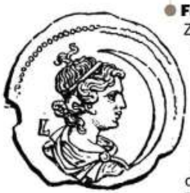
Lost in translation

Zenobia's full name in Greek was Septimia Zenobia, but was most likely a Latinisation of the Arabic al-Zabba, which was itself a translation of Zenobia's true Aramaic name, Bat-Zabbai, or 'daughter of Zabbai'. Zenobia's native language was Aramaic.

Roman triumph

Some sources claim that a captured and chained Zenobia was paraded through Rome as part of Aurelian's massive triumph in 274 CE, featuring 800 gladiators and conquered captives from every barbarian tribe. Some say she rode in a golden chariot he had built for her entrance into Rome.





Face fit for a coin
Zenobia ordered the Alexandria mint to produce new coins featuring her silhouette and the presumptuous inscription, 'S. Zenobia Aug', shorthand for Septimia Zenobia Augusta, Empress of the East.
270 CE

Bread baroness
Zenobia further provoked Rome by cutting off Egyptian wheat exports to the Imperial capital, where politicians assuaged the plebeians with free bread and circuses. If she was picking a fight, she would certainly get one.
271 CE

Eastern empire
At its peak, Zenobia's Palmyrene Empire absorbed the entire eastern shore of the Mediterranean, stretching from the Nile to the Black Sea. Most of her conquered territory submitted to their new empress without resistance.
272 CE

Aurelian strikes back
Emperor Aurelian follows his conquest of the Goths by turning his attention – and his armies – east to the Palmyrene Empire. In a rare move by the severe general, Aurelian spares the citizens of conquered Palmyrene cities, causing even more to surrender peacefully.
273 CE

274

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527 – 548 CE

Theodora of Byzantium

As a courtesan who had risen to the rank of queen, Theodora was both loved and reviled. Just who was the woman behind one of Byzantium's greatest emperors?

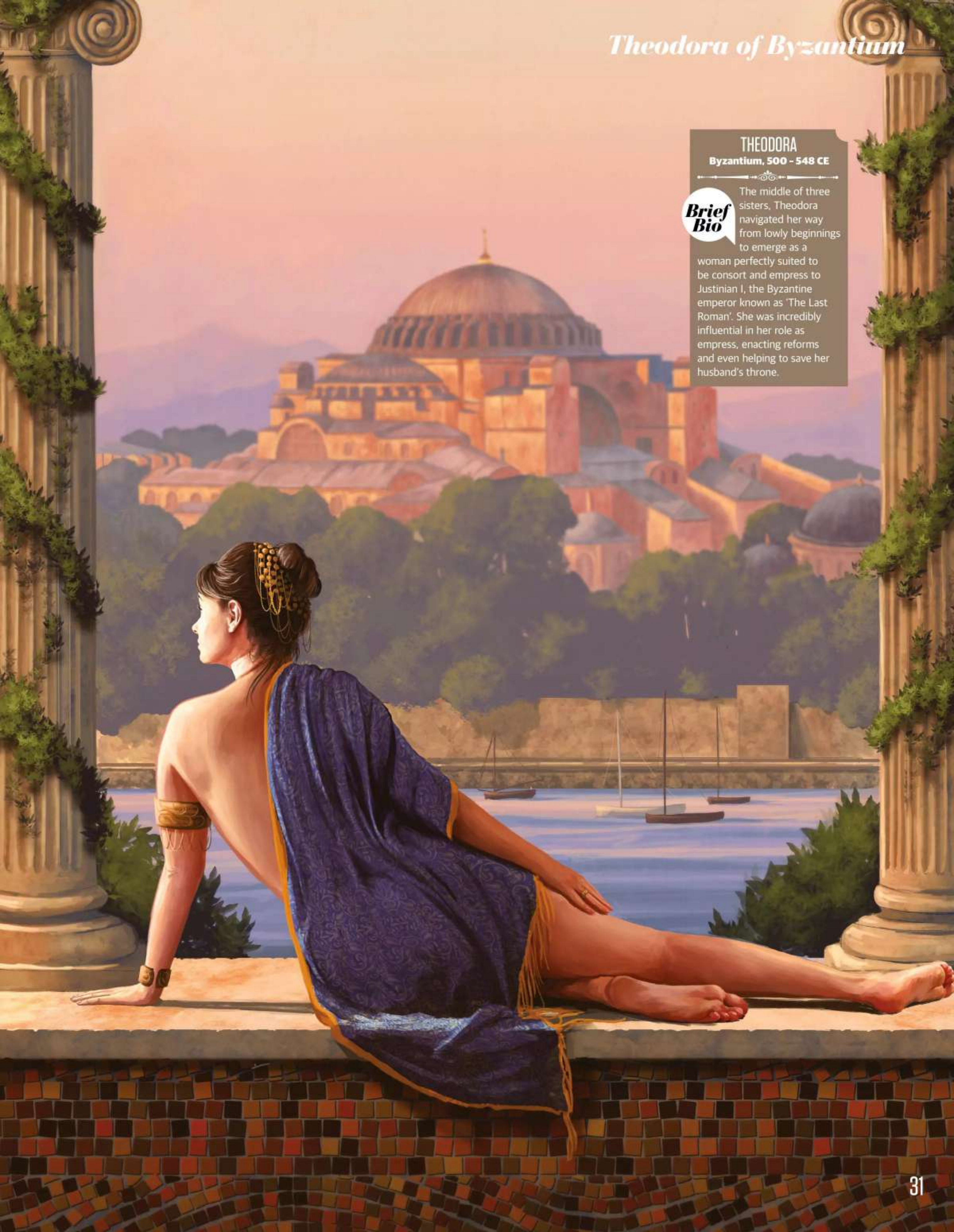
Born to a bear trainer and an actress in Constantinople, the woman fated to become the wife of a Byzantine emperor hardly had an auspicious start in life. In Theodora's early years her life took a path that her later detractors would revel in, providing effortless fuel for the gossip that would surround her even after death. For there is little doubt that Theodora had two intertwined and equally suspect occupations before her marriage: she was well known both as an actress and as a courtesan. This line of work was also taken by at least one of her two sisters, and it is said that her mother ushered the girls into their professions after the death of their father, Acacius.

John of Ephesus, a writer sympathetic towards Theodora, refers to her as having come "from the brothel", while the less friendly Procopius, whose writings are our largest single source of information on Theodora, also repeats this detail. From Procopius, we learn that the young Theodora made quite a name for herself: with her provocative dress and a habit of stripping on stage, she titillated her audiences, even allowing buckets of grain to be emptied between her legs for geese to peck out. When the raunchy performances were over, Theodora went further still and offered herself to all, both high and low, attending banquets to drum up custom.

However true or not the worst exaggerations of Procopius, this was not a life that would do for one such as Theodora. Early on it became apparent that she was intelligent, resourceful and able to think for herself, traits that would serve her well. At 16, Theodora left Constantinople for North Africa, where she spent four years in the role as mistress to Hecebolius, a Syrian official. The whole matter ended in tears, but this did not bring her down; on her slow return to Constantinople via Alexandria and Antioch, Theodora met patriarchs and others of influence, learning and honing the skills and manners that she displayed to such great effect as empress. It was during this time that she is said to have converted to the controversial Monophysite religion, which held the belief that the human and divine natures of Christ were fused into one.

> It is thought that Theodora first made a name for herself with a carnal performance of the Leda and the Swan Greek myth

Setting her former occupations behind her, in 522, in her early 20s, Theodora returned to Constantinople. She set herself up as a wool spinner, making her home close to the palace. Here she caught the eye of Justinian - heir and nephew to Emperor Justin I. The middle-aged Justinian



THEODORA

Byzantium, 500 – 548 CE

Brief Bio

The middle of three sisters, Theodora navigated her way from lowly beginnings to emerge as a woman perfectly suited to be consort and empress to Justinian I, the Byzantine emperor known as 'The Last Roman'. She was incredibly influential in her role as empress, enacting reforms and even helping to save her husband's throne.

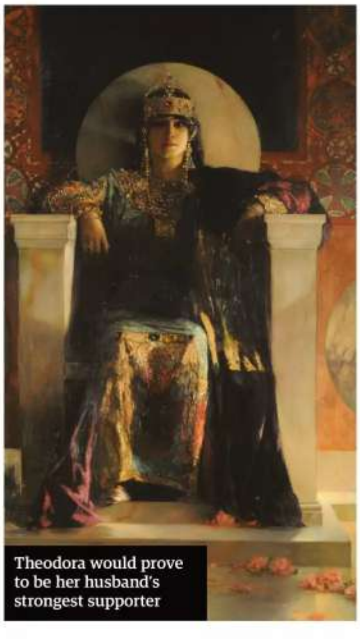
The Byzantine Empire

One of the most powerful forces in Europe for 1,000 years

The Byzantine Empire that was to become so powerful began in the year 330, when the Emperor Constantine founded a new city, Constantinople, on the site of the former Greek colony of Byzantium. The two halves of the empire, the West and the East, diverged further and further over the years, but this proved to be beneficial to the eastern part, which survived after the western half fell in 476 before the Visigoth barbarian Odoacer.

Ruled by Roman law and with Roman-based political institutions, the main languages of the empire were Latin and Greek. A prominent power through most of its existence, the Byzantine Empire reached it's greatest peak geographically during the reign of Justinian, during which most of the Western Empire was reclaimed. At the height of its powers, the empire was a seat of culture; theology, art and literature were promoted and preserved within it. There was also a large influence on the West as Byzantine scholars were commissioned to translate Greek and Arabic texts that would otherwise have been lost. Despite many challenges, the empire kept its position due to strength of location, power of wealth and political influence.

Despite this, the Byzantine Empire was in decline from the 13th century, suffering losses both economically and territorial. By the 14th century, the empire was increasingly threatened by the rising Turks. The end finally came on 29 May 1453 when Constantinople was attacked and won by the Ottoman emperor Mehmed II. Emperor Constantine died fighting as the city was taken, sealing the fate of the long-lived empire, with the iconic Hagia Sophia cathedral taken over and turned into a mosque.

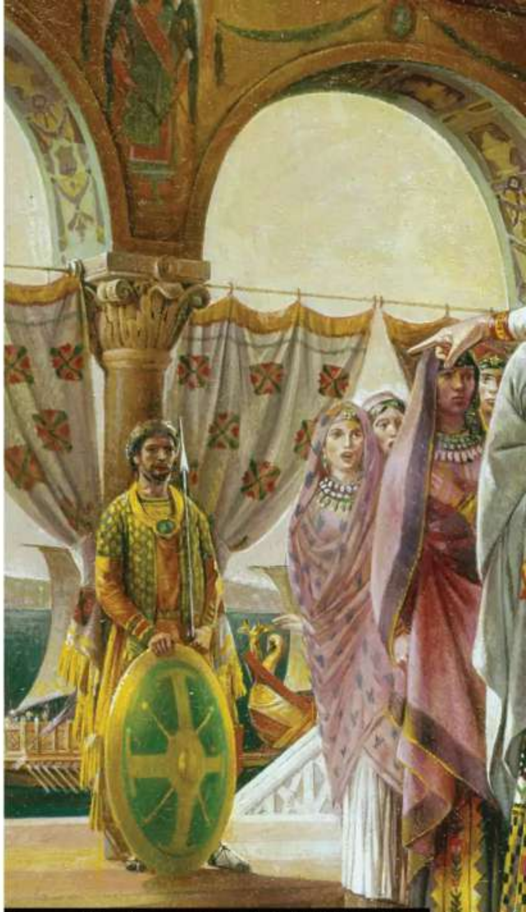


Theodora would prove to be her husband's strongest supporter

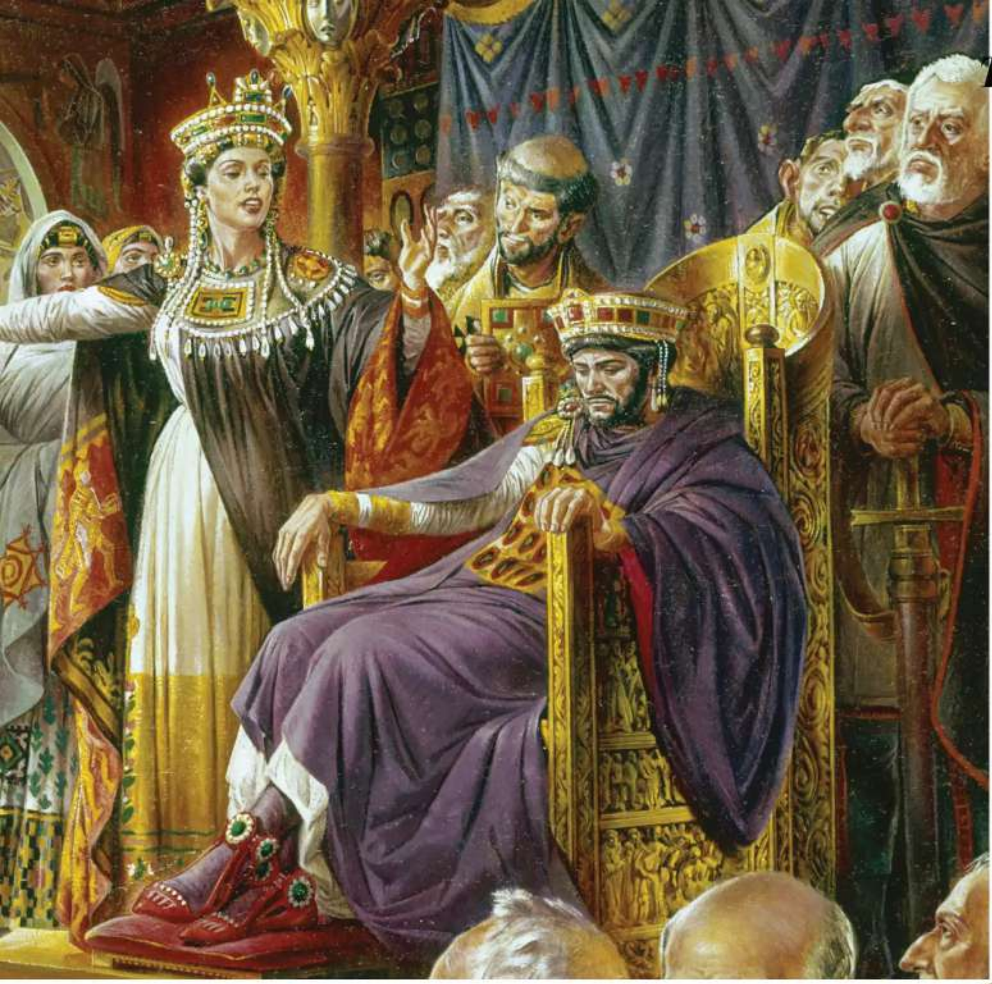
was captivated by her, and was determined to marry Theodora: but there was one, apparently insurmountable, obstacle. An old law stated that government officials were prohibited from marrying actresses, and although Theodora had renounced her previous role, her dalliance with the stage now barred her from becoming the wife of the man who was heir to the empire. To further compound the problem, Euphamia, empress to Justin I, was a firm upholder of this law, and, due to religious and personal differences, was further ill-disposed towards Theodora in particular. It seemed as if the couple were to be thwarted, but luck was on their side. Euphamia died c.524, and it became clear then that resistance to the match had been decidedly one-sided. Free now to act without causing himself marital strife and also under pressure from his heir, Justin repealed the law that stood in the way of the happy couple and they married soon after, uncaring of the scandal that followed in its wake.

In 527, Justinian came into his role of emperor, and Theodora found herself empress of Byzantium. If ashamed of her past in any way, Theodora made no effort to hide it; friends from her old life were made welcome at the palace, and her illegitimate daughter - whether Justinian's or from a previous relationship is unclear - was free to join her mother. Justinian likewise does not seem to have been troubled by his wife's past, perhaps in part due to his own less-than-illustrious beginnings. Despite or perhaps because of her humble start in life, Theodora was a stickler for ceremony and show in her role of empress. As on the stage, looks and appearances were everything, and she would not let anyone - high or low - forget for one moment that she was empress. Images of Theodora show a well-dressed woman, resplendent in gold and purple robes and glittering jewellery, the crown that marked her power and high position visible for all to see. Theodora also made sure she was given due honour and acknowledgement by visiting officials and members of the imperial household, often, it was alleged, making important dignitaries wait for hours at a time before receiving them.

Theodora was not content to be a trophy wife, and there are clear indications that she sought to better herself. She was an avid reader, choosing to read herself rather than be read to, and was actively involved in the governance of the empire. She saw that those she favoured were promoted and received positions, while actively working to remove those who did not support her or looked down on her. The empress did not suffer fools, and, according to Theodora's detractors at least, did not hesitate to remove those who displeased her. It was not unusual for a Byzantine empress to have influence both in court and even political matters, bestowing patronage and holding sway with her husband. Likewise, communicating with foreign envoys and visiting dignitaries was well within the remit of the role. With Theodora, however, came the first time that an empress went further; not only did she fill the conventionally accepted place of consort, but, according to some accounts, she



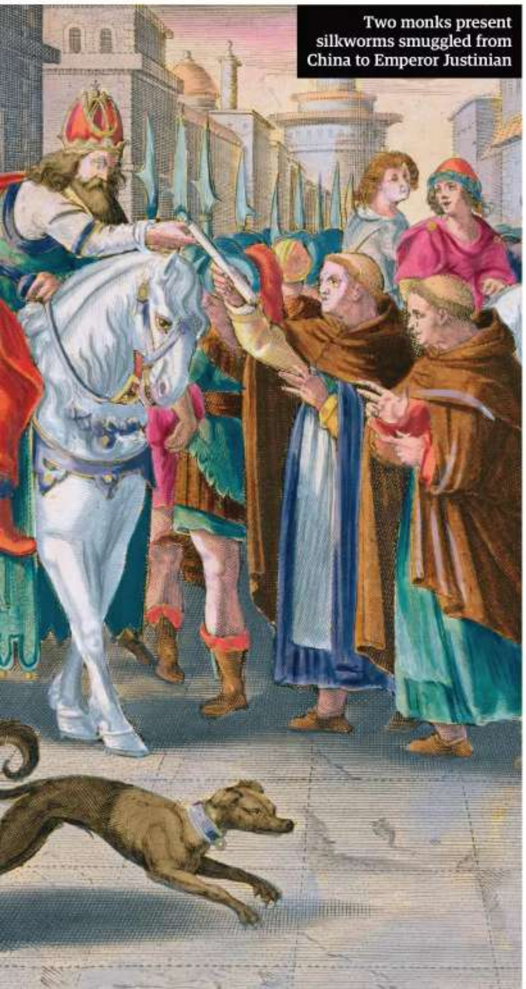
Empress Theodora urges Justinian to fight the mob, reminding him that "purple makes a fine shroud" - better to die fighting as an emperor than to run away



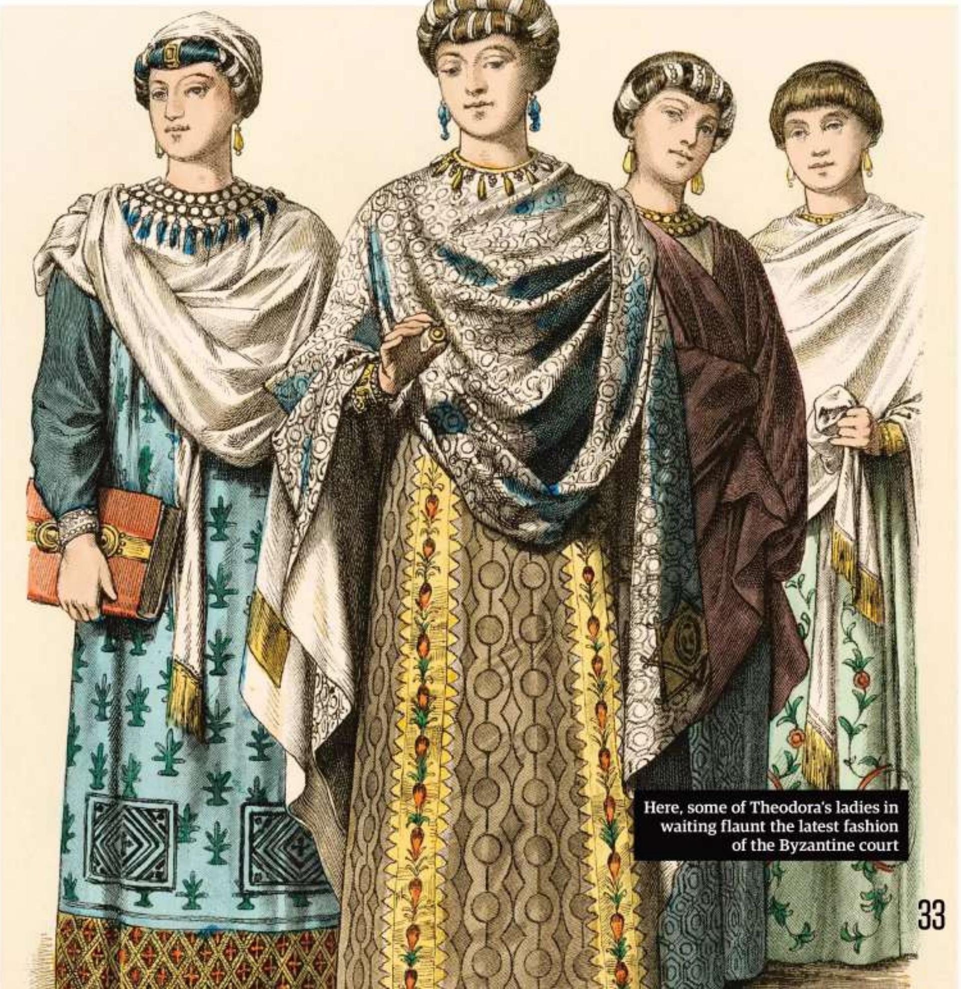
was empress regnant in her own right in all but name. It is hardly surprising that there would be hostility towards the upstart empress, and there were those who grumbled, both behind closed doors and publicly, about the brazen woman from such humble beginnings. Indeed, Theodora's seeming flaunting of her past and refusal to disown her background would have been seen as a challenge to the established order.

Unsurprisingly then, when Justinian embarked upon a series of reforms within the city, Theodora was not idle. The rights of women were something that particularly concerned Theodora. In 528, women of all classes were protected by a law that ordered the death penalty for kidnap or rape, whereas before lower class women and slaves were exempt, at the mercy of anyone. In 534-535, laws on prostitution were also tightened, and it became illegal to force or coerce anyone into the profession. Likewise, women were granted more rights in cases of divorce and also where property was concerned through her direct involvement, and killing a wife who had committed adultery was also prohibited.

In all of this, Theodora had the backing of the emperor, who listened to and respected her views. In particular, Theodora was instrumental in attempts to reform the corruption in Constantinople's brothels. Prostitution was a major issue within the city, and exploitation and mistreatment were rife. With her husband's backing, Theodora set out to



Two monks present silkworms smuggled from China to Emperor Justinian



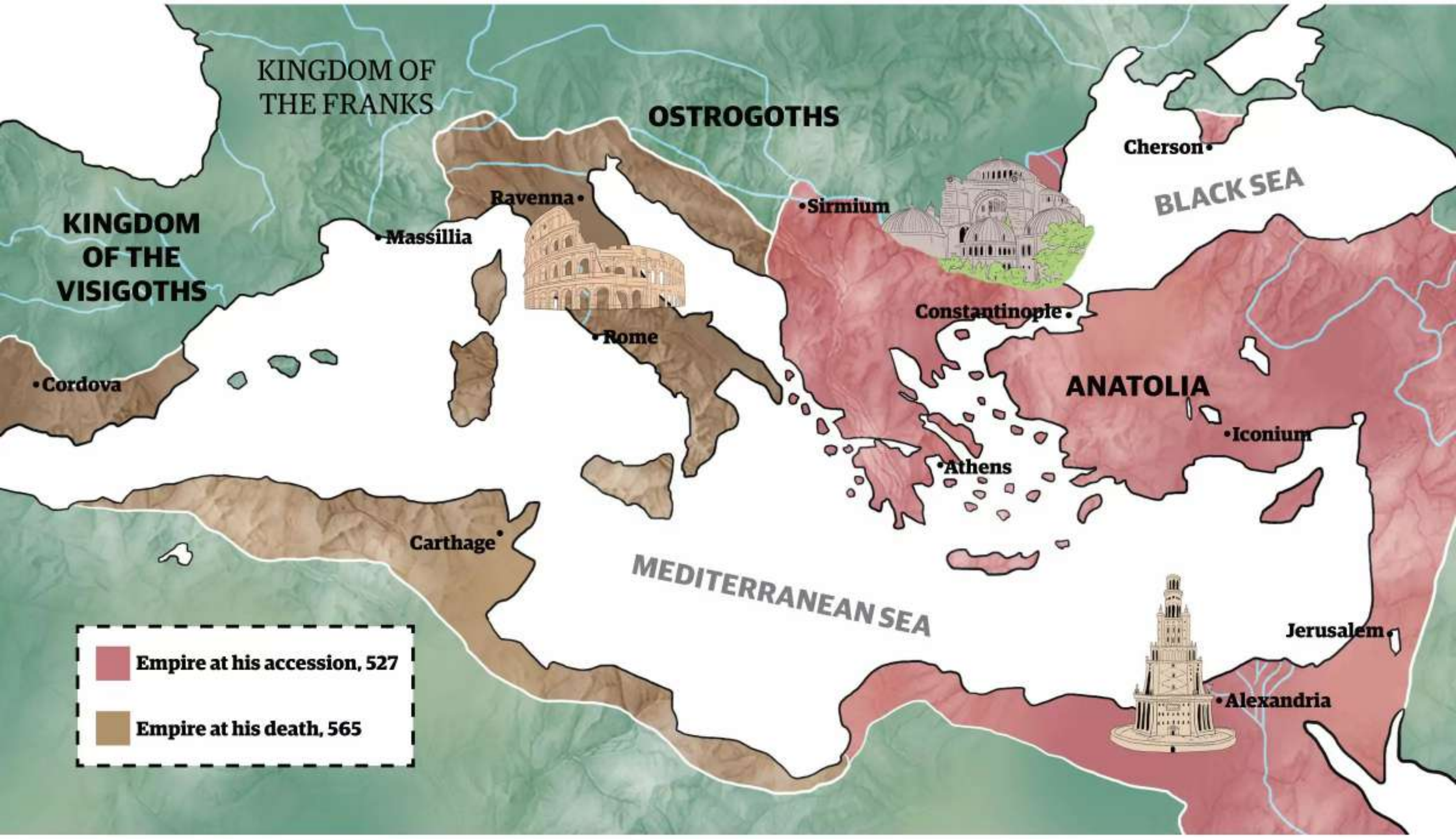
Here, some of Theodora's ladies in waiting flaunt the latest fashion of the Byzantine court address this, setting up a convent as an escape for the women caught in this abusive life. Sources differ, however, and two distinct versions of events can be read. In one telling, the women were rescued from the horrors of the streets, living in comfort and harmony in their reformed lives behind the convent walls. Procopius, however, paints a more sinister picture: in his version, the women were kidnapped, moved into the convent against their will and forcibly reformed. The empress, far from being their saviour, was in fact jailer and tormentor; the women did not want to be removed from the life they knew, and some even committed suicide by throwing themselves onto the rocks below the convent in utter despair at their 'rescue'.

> Theodora and Justinian are saints in the Eastern Orthodox Church and are commemorated on 14 November

Not mentioned by contemporary sources, it is likely that the worst excesses recounted by Procopius were part of the embittered smear campaign later carried out against Theodora and Justinian. Whether truthful or not, however, there are hints at a darker side to Theodora's story, at the lengths the proud and self-righteous empress would go to achieve her aims. There are tales of forced marriages at Theodora's behest, and the vindictive hounding of officials who displeased her from office. Although not proven, there were also rumours Theodora was involved in the murder of Amalasuintha of the Goths, a potential rival for Justinian's hand.

It is Theodora's reported influence during the events of the infamous Nika revolt, however, that are the most cited example of her power and influence both in political matters and with her husband. In January 532, the Hippodrome in Constantinople, the venue of the popular chariot races, was the scene of the biggest challenge to Justinian's reign. The sweeping reforms and expansive building programme instigated by the emperor throughout the city were met with protest at the disruption they caused, and this discontent erupted as the pressures took their toll on an already strained population. Riots broke out, and although they were put down and the ringleaders rounded up, two escaped, with mercy demanded for the fugitives at the next races. When this was denied by Justinian, violence surged afresh, and with the additional involvement of members of the aristocracy, it became not just an occasion of popular unrest, but a political coup with the intention of removing the emperor for good.

A rival candidate, a nobleman with imperial blood named Hypatius, was proposed and enthroned, the



Timeline

533 CE

- **North Africa**
  Justinian's troops win a decisive victory, reclaiming the North African territories that had been conquered by the Vandals, marking the beginning of two decades of conquest.
  533 CE
- **Sicily**
  General Belisarius invades with a force of 7,500 men and, meeting little resistance, conquers Sicily, gaining a gateway through into Italy and beyond.
  535 CE
- **Rome**
  Rome is captured in December, only to be besieged by Vitigis, the king of the Ostrogoths, from February 537 until March 538. Justinian's troops emerge triumphant.
  536 CE
- **Milan**
  The city is claimed by Mundilas, but this victory is short lived; despite relief being sent, Milan is recaptured and burned by the vengeful might of the Gothic army.
  538 CE

Justinian devoted much of his reign to attempting to restore the glory of Rome

violence in the Hippodrome escalating and forcing Justinian and his advisers back into the palace. The emperor was prepared to flee, when the former actress stepped forward to perform perhaps the most important role of her life. It was not, Theodora told her husband, time to run away - an emperor should never be in the position of fugitive, and it was better to die an emperor in the role allotted to him than to be safe in hiding. Shamed, scolded or given much-needed fight, Justinian stood firm. Sending his troops to the Hippodrome, the revolt was decisively crushed, with between 30,000 and 35,000 rebels left dead. The pretender Hypatius was executed, as were others closely involved, and Justinian emerged the victor: his position unassailable and his wife vindicated and triumphant.

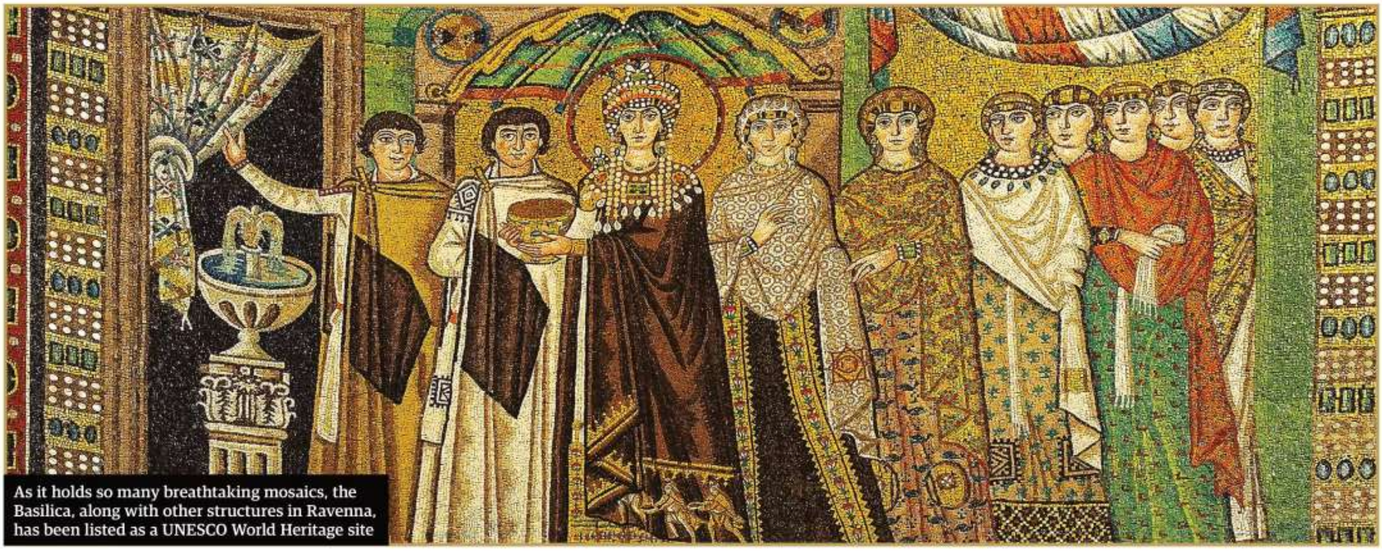
After Nika, it was clear that Justinian and his empress were there to stay, and never again was there such a serious challenge to his title. Theodora had been instrumental in this display of power, and is generally considered to have saved the day. It was not the only time she was said to have saved Justinian's throne: when in the early 540s Justinian lay seriously ill with plague, it was Theodora who effectively took over the reins of state, holding them until her husband recovered.

Based on mutual respect and affection as it was, the nature of Theodora's relationship with Justinian meant that they were able to present a united front, even when they differed in opinion. One area where this was abundantly clear was in matters of religion. Theodora had converted to the controversial Monophysite brand of Christianity at an early age, while the emperor stood firm in his Chalcedonian beliefs. The fact they were able to maintain their differences while keeping their respect for each other and working together as a united force demonstrated their empathy, maturity and integrity. Here again Theodora's influence can be seen; she not only founded a Monophysite monastery, but she also offered protection in the palace itself for those who were in danger for their beliefs, sheltering Monophysite bishops and leaders. One in particular, Anthimus, the patriarch of Constantinople, she sheltered for 12 years in her own chambers. Theodora is also said to have outfoxed her own husband when it came to the conversion of the people of Nobatae in southern Egypt; Justinian had earmarked them for the Chalcedonian faith, but through her wiles, Theodora caused his missionaries to be delayed, her own Monophysite men arriving first and winning the common people to the Monophysite cause.

Theodora died in Constantinople on 28 June 548. Her influence continued even after her death, however, through the respect and honour Justinian showed to her name, the emperor's grief at her funeral declared to be most genuine by those who observed it. Not only did he maintain the promise made to his wife to protect the Monophysite community she had established, Justinian also continued to enact legislation that dealt with the rights of women as his wife had done during her life, ensuring that Theodora's legacy to the city that had known most of her life was to live long after her. Charismatic, bold and unforgettable, Theodora remains one of the most fascinating and influential empresses the Byzantine Empire had ever known.

Ceiling of the Basilica of San Vitale

One of the wonders of Ravenna, Italy, the Basilica holds a unique position in the history of art and architecture. Begun in 526 and completed 21 years later, this marvel of Roman and Byzantine styles is the only structure of its kind to survive from Justinian I's reign, and holds the biggest collection of Byzantine mosaics outside of Constantinople (Istanbul).



As it holds so many breathtaking mosaics, the Basilica, along with other structures in Ravenna, has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site

Ravenna
The one-time capital of the Western Roman Empire and current capital of the Ostrogoths is reached by Belisarius and taken for the empire in May of this year.
540 CE

Italy
Troubles abound for Justinian's forces during the next decade as he loses ground in Italy due to fighting in the east. Much of what had already been gained is lost.
541 CE

Iberian Peninsula
With an army 2,000 strong, the empire's forces take several south-eastern cities; the new province of Spania will be founded in the aftermath.
552 CE

Italy
Under Narses, the empire's forces finally prove triumphant against an enemy force of 30,000 and, after protracted fighting, Italy is decisively reclaimed for the empire.
554 CE

© Alamy; Kevin McGivern; Kym

768 – 814 CE

Charlemagne

The 'father of Europe' and ruler of much of France and Germany, Charlemagne made his name as a king, but left a legacy as the first Roman emperor since the 5th century...

Over 300 years, Europe had fallen into darkness. With the power of the Pope and the once mighty Roman church beset by enemies, the legacy of the western Roman Empire toppled as steadily and as surely as the Caesars had themselves, stability withdrawing like overstretched legionnaires and knowledge fading away like the crumbling Roman roads that cross-hatched the continent.

Europe needed a strong leader to pull it back from the precipice, and it got a brace of them in the form of the Carolingian dynasty, a family of self-made kings who stabilised their lands by force, expanded their frontiers with terrifying aggression and ensured the primacy of the Christian church at the point of the sword. Yet, through this crucible of violence emerged a western Europe reforged to survive another 1,000 years.

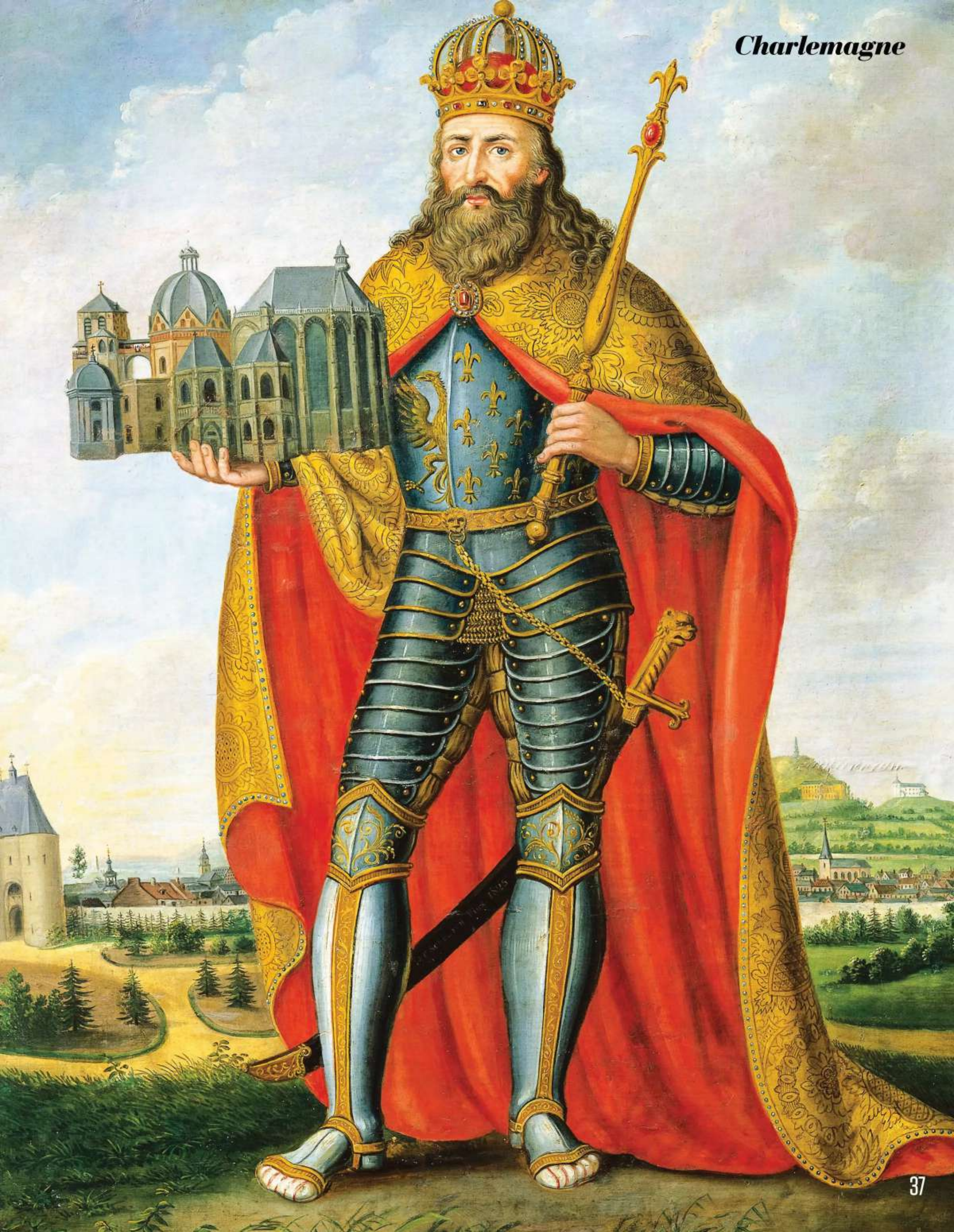
By the 6th century, most of what is now France, western Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Belgium was inhabited by the Franks, a Germanic tribe split into several small kingdoms that had rushed into the power vacuum left by the fall of Rome. These petty principalities had been united not by their monarch – rulers in name only, the rois fainéants, the 'do-nothing kings' of the Merovingian dynasty, had been increasingly sidelined by their own ministers – but by the

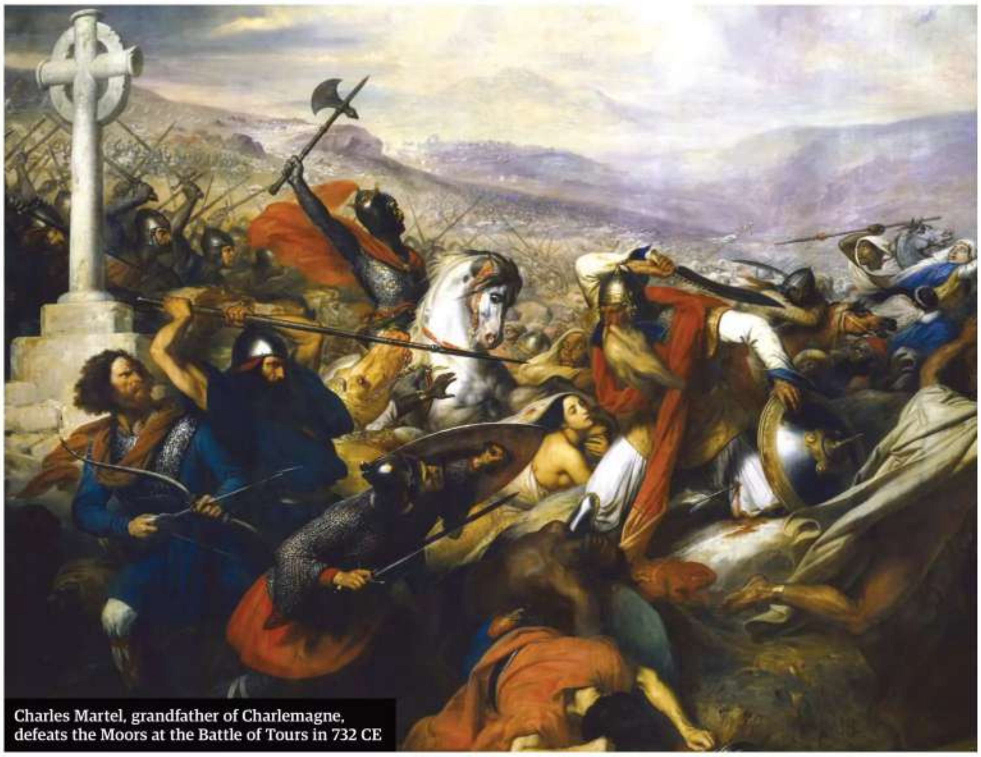
CHARLEMAGNE

Western Europe, 742 - 814 CE

Brief Bio

Taking the throne of the Franks in 768, Charlemagne rose from relatively humble royalty to a position of greatness. Adding King of Italy to his portfolio in 774, he eventually ruled all of continental western Europe by the year 800. A pious man, his relationship with the church increased his political power.





Charles Martel, grandfather of Charlemagne, defeats the Moors at the Battle of Tours in 732 CE

Mayor of the Palace, the executive of the royal administration who was half-prime minister and half-Shogun-esque warlord.

Pepin of Herstal had warred his way to stability between 680 CE and his death in 714 CE, bringing the other Frankish lands to heel and taking Christianity to their furthest and most pagan reaches. His son, Charles Martel, was a stronger hand yet. Though Pepin had nominated his grandson as successor, Charles - born out of wedlock and excluded from the court - was having none of it, and took the not-quite-throne by force. Despite not being Pepin's choice of heir, he more than honoured his father's vision, expanding the centralised control of the Frank lands and expanding his rule further into modern Holland, Denmark and Germany with a standing army and revolutionary use of heavy cavalry, the foundation of Europe's knights. He defeated the pagan Saxons in the east and halted the advance of the Moors - the North African and Spanish Muslims of the powerful Umayyad Caliphate - who attempted to follow up their conquest of Spain by pushing across the Pyrenees mountains into France. 'Charles the Hammer' was even offered high office by the Pope, which he declined, but it was an omen of his grandson's own journey to come.

Succeeding his father Pepin the Short in 768 CE - who had given up the pretence of being anything other than supreme ruler by forcing the last Merovingian king into a monastery and taking the title of 'King of the Franks' for himself - Charlemagne, which means 'Charles the Great', shared the zeal of his predecessors. At war for most of his life, Charlemagne took Charles Martel's fight against the Moors into northern Spain, continued the conquest and conversion of the Saxons and launched new campaigns against the Lombards of northern Italy, the Slavs in Croatia and Avars in Hungary.

Leading his personal guard, the scara cavalry, into battle with his sword Joyeuse, Charlemagne's exploits have one armoured foot in myth and the other in fact, with separating the two being a difficult task, but his journey from king to the first Roman emperor since the fall of the Roman Empire has little to do with his legend as a warrior king and everything to do with the insecurity of the church.

Pope Leo III succeeded Adrian I on the day of the previous pontiff's burial, so fearful was he that the Frankish king to whom his predecessor owed his lands and safety would feel a right to interfere in the election of the new pope. Yet, despite his wariness he was quick to bring Rome's most powerful ally on side, along with the letter that announced his succession, Leo included the keys to St Peter's Basilica and the Pope's banner. The not-so subtle message was that he viewed Charlemagne as the defender of the Holy See, and trusted him with Rome's protection. The Frank was equally magnanimous in return, congratulating the pontiff and sending vast riches, the spoils of his war against the Avars, but not without condition, suggesting that as he happened to be the stalwart defender of Christianity, the pope had a duty to pray for the Frankish armies as they continued their conquest.

Charlemagne would honour his side of this implied bargain, and in return Leo elevated him to an office left vacant since the 5th century.

While Leo engaged in his letter-writing campaign with the monarch to the north west and used the Avar loot to become a patron of the arts, the family of the late Adrian I launched a conspiracy to remove him from his post and replace him with his nephew Paschal the Primicerius. On 25 April 799 CE, during the procession of The Greater Litanies through the Eternal City, Leo was attacked by armed thugs who stabbed him in the eyes and attempted to tear out his tongue at the root. After dragging him to the church of San Silvestro in Capite and trying to gouge out his eyes again, the bloodied pope was left unconscious as a prisoner at the monastery of St Erasmus. Accused of perjury and fornication by his rivals, the wounded - but amazingly not blinded or voiceless - Leo fled Rome to Spoleto, 126 kilometres (78 miles) north of the city, where under the protection of the Duke of Spoleto he

> "Charlemagne's journey from king to emperor has everything to do with the insecurity of the church"

St Giles pardons the Emperor. Although a popular legend, there's no evidence that the two ever met was able to make his way to Charlemagne at Paderborn in Saxony.

That such a loyal servant of the Frankish king could be found so close to Rome, deep within Italy's central Umbria region, neatly underlines the unbalanced relationship of power between the Franks and the Roman Catholic church that had initially caused Leo such anxiety. Though the territory had been given to Rome in 776 after the defeat of the Lombards, the king retained the power to choose the Duke, making papal control as meaningless as that of the last Merovingian kings under Charlemagne's ancestors.

Clearly, the threat of political interference from Charlemagne had been trumped by that of actual bodily harm, and Leo begged for the monarch's aid. He had no authority to do so - neither he nor the conspirators in Rome were subjects of the Franks, and no law yet existed that would make bishops subordinate to secular authority. With conflict left in Saxony to pursue, Charlemagne let the matter stew for a year and kept the recovering pontiff as his guest. Finally heading to Rome in November 800 CE with a sizeable (and no doubt fairly threatening) entourage, Charlemagne summoned a council of the city's religious authorities and patiently listened to the accusations put to Leo, before allowing the deposed pontiff to make an impassioned plea of innocence.

Unsurprisingly, Charlemange took Leo's side, and ordered the conspirators' executions, but Leo requested that they instead be exiled, with the unpopular pope perhaps seeing an opportunity to impress with capacity for forgiveness.

Crowned 'Emperor of the Romans' on Christmas Day that same year by the grateful pope, the official report insists that Charlemagne was ambushed like some sort of early-medieval surprise party. The king's biographer, the monk Einhard, claimed that his liege had such "aversion [to being crowned Emperor] that he declared he would not have set foot in the church... if he could have foreseen the designs of the pope."

Birth of the modern Europe

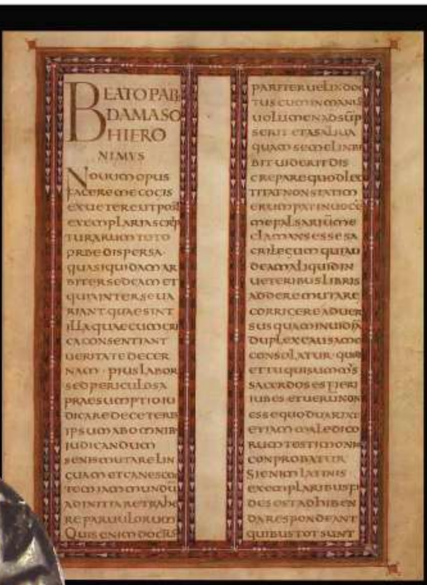
Three big ways in which Charlemagne changed the continent

01 Man of letters

Frustrated by his own difficulty in mastering the written word, Charlemagne rolled out a system of reforms to the very shape of writing, insisting on a double space to separate words, an indent at the start of a paragraph and punctuation marks to indicate where the reader should pause or stop. Question marks and lower case letters also appeared.

02 Silver age

Due to a shortage of gold, Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxon King Offa standardised their currencies based on a pound of silver - in Latin, libra - which was broken down into 20 sous, each of 12 deniers. This is the origin of many global currencies past and present, from the British pound to the Italian lira.

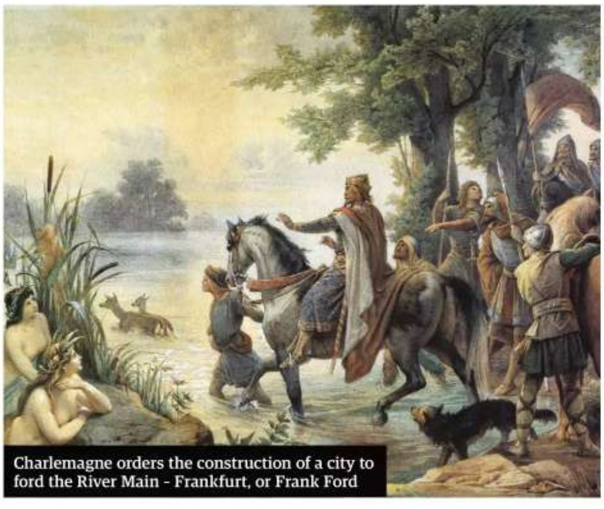


03 Out of the dark

Charlemagne's interest in the arts led to the Carolingian Renaissance, a flowering of art, literature, poetry and learning. The Dark Ages traditionally cover the 6th to 13th centuries, but for the Franks it was over before it began, and 90 per cent of surviving Roman manuscripts do so because monks copied them.

> "The way Charlemagne signed his name changed nothing of the way he conducted his affairs"

It's entirely possible that Charlemange and Leo came to some agreement during their year together. After all, the idea of grinning priests hiding a bejewelled imperial crown as if it were a birthday cake is too ludicrous to contemplate. Documents from his reign reveal that Charlemagne preferred using the title 'Charles, the most serene Augustus crowned by God, the great, peaceful Emperor ruling the Roman Empire' rather than the simpler and more often used 'Emperor of the Romans'. These aren't entirely the actions of someone with an aversion to the role, and the king's humility may have been as expertly stage-managed as Leo's mercy.



Charlemagne orders the construction of a city to ford the River Main - Frankfurt, or Frank Ford

Nonetheless, with his rule over the Frankish lands uncontested and his empire secured through sheer military prowess, Charlemagne no more needed to declare himself Roman emperor than the fearsome Charles Martel needed to be king, but the vulnerable pope required an emperor to protect him and a vast Empire with the church at its heart. Only Rome had nostalgia for its lost empire, the Franks held their 4th century resistance to Roman rule, and their role in dismembering the Roman Empire as a point of fierce pride.

Ultimately though, the way Charlemagne signed his name changed nothing of the way he conducted his affairs, and the impact of his ascension - reluctant or willing - to Europe's highest office would take another 150 years to make itself fully known.

The first Holy Roman Emperor, Otto I, took the title in 962 CE and reinvented himself in the Frankish king's image, creating a powerful multi-ethnic state and a crown that would endure for over 1,000 years.

Through the Holy Roman Empire, Charlemagne's rule defined not just the primacy of France as one of Europe's imperial, religious and cultural superpowers, but of numerous Austrian, German and Italian states too.

A career that began for Charlemagne as king of the Franks ended not just as emperor, but also as the father of the Europe that we can still recognise today.

© Getty

1066 – 1087

William I

From the illegitimate son of a duke to the holder of the English crown, William I conquered detractors, kings and even the odds to become one of Britain's most memorable rulers

In 1028, William was born into a period rife with violence and disorder. Despite every nobleman owing fealty to the King of France, many duchies and fiefdoms were in constant flux as political alliances chopped and changed at a moment's notice. France itself had been at war with its rival Flanders for years, creating an intense air of conflict across much of Western Europe.

William's social status was also of some contention. His father, Robert I, Duke of Normandy, never married his mother, Herleva of Falaise, so the young Norman was born a bastard. However, William would be Robert's only child, so the presence of his father's blood was strong enough for the duke to name him as his heir. So serious was he about it that he gathered a group of Norman magnates in January 1034 to swear fealty to William as Robert's true successor. Soon after, Robert left on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Over a year later, Robert fell ill on his return from the Holy Land and died in Nicaea, Greece. And so, at the age of eight, William inherited one of the most powerful political positions in France.

The first few years of William's tenure as Duke of Normandy were surprisingly smooth, mostly due to two considerably powerful supporters - namely his great-uncle Archbishop Robert and the king of France, Henry I. Such influential allies enabled William to retain the fealty over the Norman nobles he'd inherited from his father, but such support was not meant to last. With the king preoccupied with the costly conflict with Flanders, and Archbishop Robert passing away in March 1037, William's duchy soon descended into chaos.

Blood ties were common in the royalty at the time. Edward the Confessor was William's first cousin, once removed

Eventually a group of William's detractors formed an uneasy alliance and led a revolt against him. Led by his cousin, Guy of Burgundy, the revolters attempted to capture the duke at Valognes, a commune in northwestern France - however, the duke escaped and sought refuge with the French king. The duke may have been young, but the title of king was quite the trump card to play.

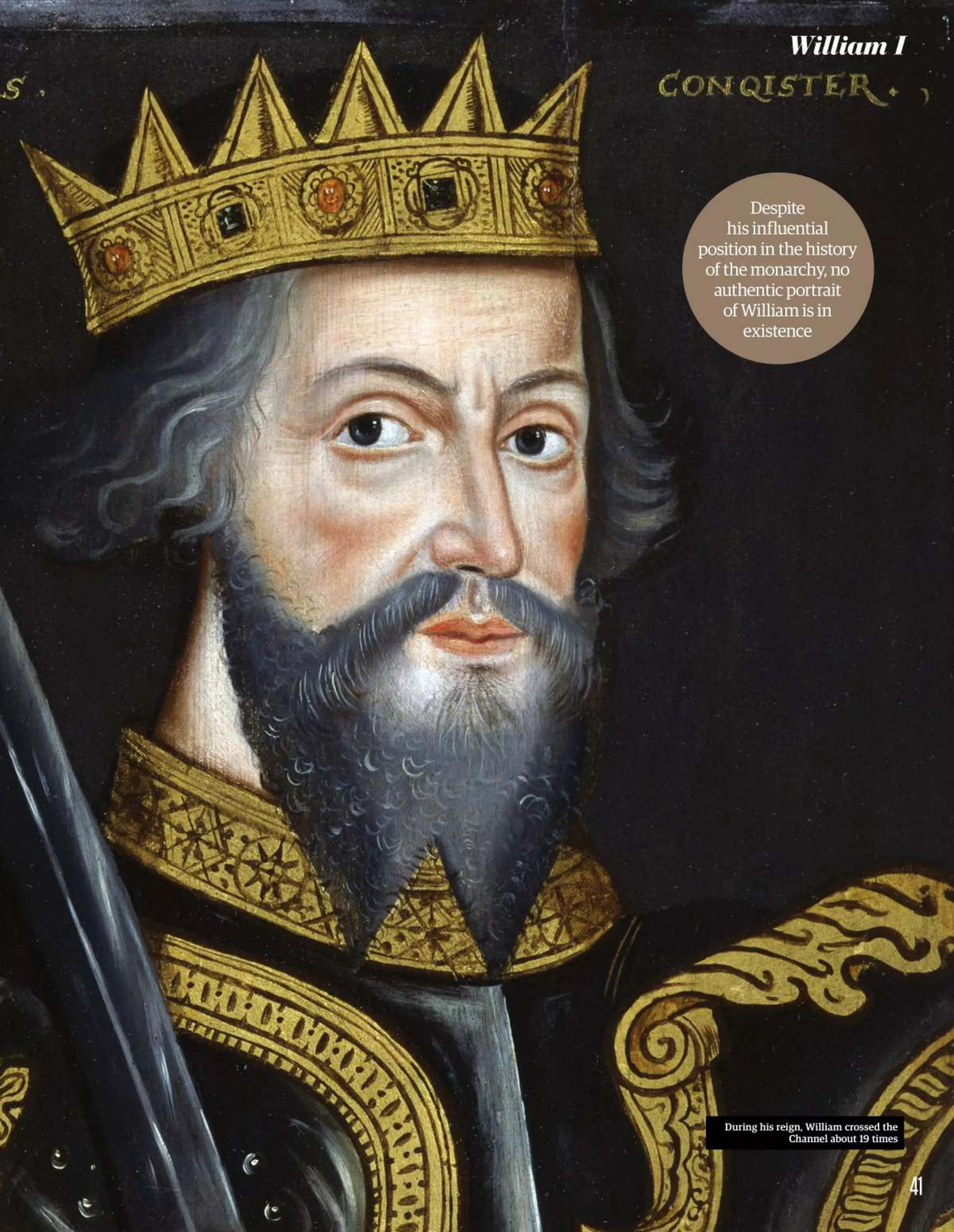
William returned to Normandy in the early months of 1047 with King Henry at his side and their armies consolidated into one considerable force. The rebel army outnumbered William's, but it lacked the leadership provided by the king's own elite. The Battle of Val-ès-Dunes descended into a number of skirmishes, but the rebel army soon

WILLIAM I

England, 1028 - 1087

Brief Bio

Whether he's remembered as William the Conqueror, or by the lesser-known moniker William the Bastard, he was one of England's most influential monarchs. With Viking blood in his veins, he united his Norman homeland with the feudal fiefdoms of England, but faced a battle to maintain his crown.



Despite his influential position in the history of the monarchy, no authentic portrait of William is in existence

During his reign, William crossed the Channel about 19 times

The White Tower is the central structure of the Tower of London and was started by William the Conqueror

Life in the time of William I

A nation divided

When William became king, he discovered a government far more complicated than Normandy's own. The country was divided into shires and counties, with these territories further divided into wapentakes (an old Norse word that refers to small meeting places).

Strength in stone

During his early reign, William commissioned a number of castles, keeps and mottes (a wooden or stone structure erected on raised earth). One of the most memorable of these was the White Tower, which remains the central structure of the Tower of London.

The hunting king

According to the medieval chronicler William of Malmesbury, William depopulated large swathes of land in the south of England in 1079 (36 parishes to be precise), to create the royal New Forest for hunting.

Forging ties

With his alliances and political standing in Normandy, William forged long-lasting ties between England and France that lasted for much of the Middle Ages (despite political and military clashes). His Viking roots also created a closer bond with Scandinavia.

The royal family

William had nine legitimate children with his wife, Matilda of Flanders. His sons were Robert, Richard, William and Henry, his daughters were Adeliza, Cecilia, Matilda, Constance, Adela and Agatha.

> "William's forces were able to rout Harold's men like cattle. And after nine or so hours of battle, the fight was over"

broke apart and William finally established his authority over the Duchy of Normandy.

When William finally turned his attention to the kingdom across the Channel, his claim held more merit than most. The English monarch at the time, King Edward I, had named William as his successor (they were, in fact, distant cousins) and a chance meeting with the most powerful earl in England, Harold Godwinson, in 1064/5 also secured his support should the duke move to inherit the throne. According to William of Poitiers, a French priest who served as the official chronicler of William's invasion, the duke had the backing of almost all the lords and earls in Normandy as well as the backing of the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VI. He even had the support of the pope, if Politer's claims are to be believed. Either way, over a period of around seven months, he gathered a fleet of 600 ships with roughly 7,000 men (2,000-3,000 of these were cavalry). It was an impressive force designed for one thing: to conquer a kingdom.

William finally made landfall on 28 September 1066. They had arrived at Pevensey in the south of England, but William soon sent an envoy to London to speak with the Anglo-Saxon king. Harold had just returned from repelling another invasion by the King of Norway, Harold Hardrada, and had rushed back to the capital after hearing of the Norman incursion. William told Harold that his claim to the throne was invalid and that he should relinquish the throne immediately or allow the pope to make an absolute decision. Harold, unsurprisingly, declined and the two leaders met in Hastings on 14 October 1066.

The Battle of Hastings was a bloody affair. Reports and speculations from historians differ on the size of Harold's army but a majority agree that it was roughly the same size as William's. The only real differences? Diversity and exhaustion. Despite a brief stop in London, Harold had marched a great deal of the army he used to defeat Harold Hardrada in the north down to the south in just two weeks. Despite their training, the men were fatigued and in no state to face a fresh Norman contingent. Harold's forces were almost entirely made up of infantryman, which was likely the deciding factor in the battle. With plenty of archers and cavalry, William's forces were able to rout Harold's men like cattle. And after nine or so hours of battle, the fight was over. Harold was dead and William was now the de facto King of England.

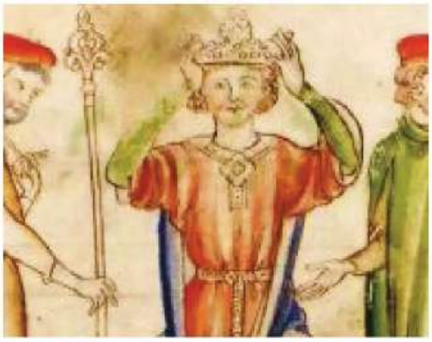
> Reports state that William was around 5'10", which was incredibly tall for a man of this time

Defining moment

William is double-crossed

January 1066

In the years leading to his death, Edward the Confessor named William, the Duke of Normandy, as his future successor. However, although William did visit England a couple of times in Edward's final years, it was difficult for him to leave the delicate political ecosystem back in Normandy. When the king died, Harold Godwinson (sometimes simply referred to as Henry Godwin) took advantage of William's absence and, against the late king's wishes, claimed the crown for himself. The Godwins were one of, if not *the*, most powerful and influential families in England at the time. Henry would be the last Anglo-Saxon king of England.



Timeline

1028

- **William is born**
While the exact date of his birth remains an issue of contention among historians, we do know that he was born in Falaise. He was the only son of Robert I and Herleva of Falaise.
1028

- **Inheriting the duchy**
When he was round the age of seven or eight, William's father Robert passed away. With his death, the title of duke and its political responsibilities fell to the young boy.
1035

- **William and Godwinson meet**
Harold Godwinson, who later became King Harold II of England, was shipwrecked off the coast of Normandy. William and Henry met during this time and Henry endorsed William's claim to the English throne.
1064

- **The invasion begins**
After assuring his affairs were in order in Normandy, William arrived at Pevensey in the South of England with a large invasion force. Once all of his troops had disembarked, William led his force into Hastings.
28 September 1066

Following his coronation on 25 December 1066, William discovered that presiding over a duchy was a world away from ruling a kingdom. Defeating Harold at Hastings and taking the capital should have cemented his position, but William's arrival was more than just the ascension of a new king - it was the end of the Anglo-Saxon era.

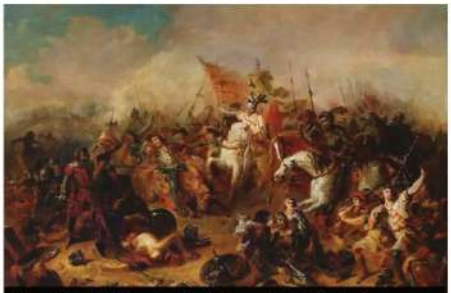
William was careful not to upend the social equilibrium of England's nobility, but a backlash was inevitable. William fought to contain a series of revolts in Dover, Exeter, Hereford, Nottingham, Durham and York, but it was the revolt led by Edgar the Atheling that was the most severe - not only in its potential threat, but also for how aggressively William dealt with it.

The revolt centred on Edgar the Atheling, the only remaining individual with a legitimate claim to William's seat of power. And when Sweyn II, King of Denmark, offered his support in 1070, the Norman grip on the north was broken. The region began to destabilise with revolts and civil unrest, and Edgar and Sweyn's forces soon took the key stronghold of York. William immediately marched from Nottingham with his own forces to settle the rebellion, but by the time he got there the revolt had all but dissolved. Edgar fled to Scotland and Sweyn left suitably paid off by the king. However, William was far from a mood to grant clemency.

He and his troops scoured the land from York to the borders of Scotland in Northumbria. So severe was the devastation that William enacted on the north that the Domesday Book (which was conducted in 1086) revealed that around 100,000 people died from starvation alone following William's 'harrowing'. Considering the census revealed the population to be 2.5 million, such a figure shows just how far the new king would go to burn his legacy into England's history books.

The Harrowing of the North, as it came to be known, was just one of the many conflicts William had to deal with throughout his 21-year reign. He was continually dealing with issues with his neighbours (such as his clashes with the king of Scotland in 1072), rebellions among his own gentry (namely the Revolt of the Earls in 1075) and even quarrels with his own children. Between his native duties as Duke of Normandy, and as King of England, William was forced to solidify his legacy with political marriages, truces and military force.

By the time of his death on 9 September 1087, William had maintained his authority over both Normandy and England for over two decades. He built over 50 castles and fortifications during his reign, determined not only to remind the people of the land who their monarch was, but to protect the nation from the very act he'd taken the throne with. While his acts of domestic growth and merciless violence have been largely overshadowed by his invasion, the man himself remains a defining figure on those storied pages.



Even though King Harold's forces had defeated one invasion and marched hundreds of miles from Newcastle to the south, they still fought valiantly in the face of William's superior cavalry and archers

The Domesday Book

In the years that followed the taking of the English crown, it became clear that official records relating to population and landholding were nearly nonexistent. Almost 19 years after his invasion, while spending Christmas in Gloucester with his advisors, William decided a census was needed. It seems likely it was planned as a way to determine how to restructure taxes across the nation. The Domesday Book (or The Great Survey as it was known then) was split into two documents; the 'Little Domesday' (which covered Suffolk, Essex and Norfolk) and the 'Great Domesday' (a larger document that covered the rest of the country). Interestingly, these documents did not cover the entire nation. This was for many reasons - for example, Westmorland and Cumberland were absent as both formed part of the Kingdom of Strathclyde until they were conquered by his son, William II, in 1092. Elsewhere, London and Winchester were left out because of their special tax status, while the County of Durham was omitted because the Bishop of Durham held ecclesiastical rights to tax that county.

Defining moment

The Battle of Hastings 14 October 1066

Prior to the main battles with the invading Normans, King Harold had already exhausted his military forces defeating *another* invading force led by Norwegian monarch Harold Hardrada at Stamford Bridge. Interestingly, King Harold knew that William was coming before Hardrada's Scandinavian force arrived, however, the Norman forces remained moored off the coast for almost seven months before disembarking. Accounts relating to the size both forces differ greatly, but it's assumed they were leading armies of between 7,000 and 10,000 men. William's forces are ultimately successful, using the considerable number of cavalrymen and archers to wear down the English contingent. King Harold died on the battlefield after taking an arrow to the eye.

Defining moment

Harrowing of the North 1070

William had defeated or outlived most of the legitimate claimants to the English throne, but one still remained. Edgar the Atheling had a great deal of support in the north of England and when Sweyn II of Denmark landed in 1069, Edgar's claim became a real threat. In 1070, he paid the Danes to leave and began to attack the land around Edgar's supporters. Over the next few months he destroyed livestock and farmland, and killed (according to reports) thousands of men, women and children. William's aim was to ensure they would never, ever revolt again.

The Great Survey
In order to determine the true worth of his English kingdom (and to unravel the holdings and lands of his earls) William commissioned a countrywide consensus. While not every part of the nation was covered, it still serves as the most detailed record from the Middle Ages.
1086

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William takes London
Despite defeating the king and the remainder of his standing army, England was far from won. Earls and lords loyal to the English king barred William's entry into Winchester and London but the Norman usurper soon overwhelmed them and took control of the royal treasury.
October-November 1066

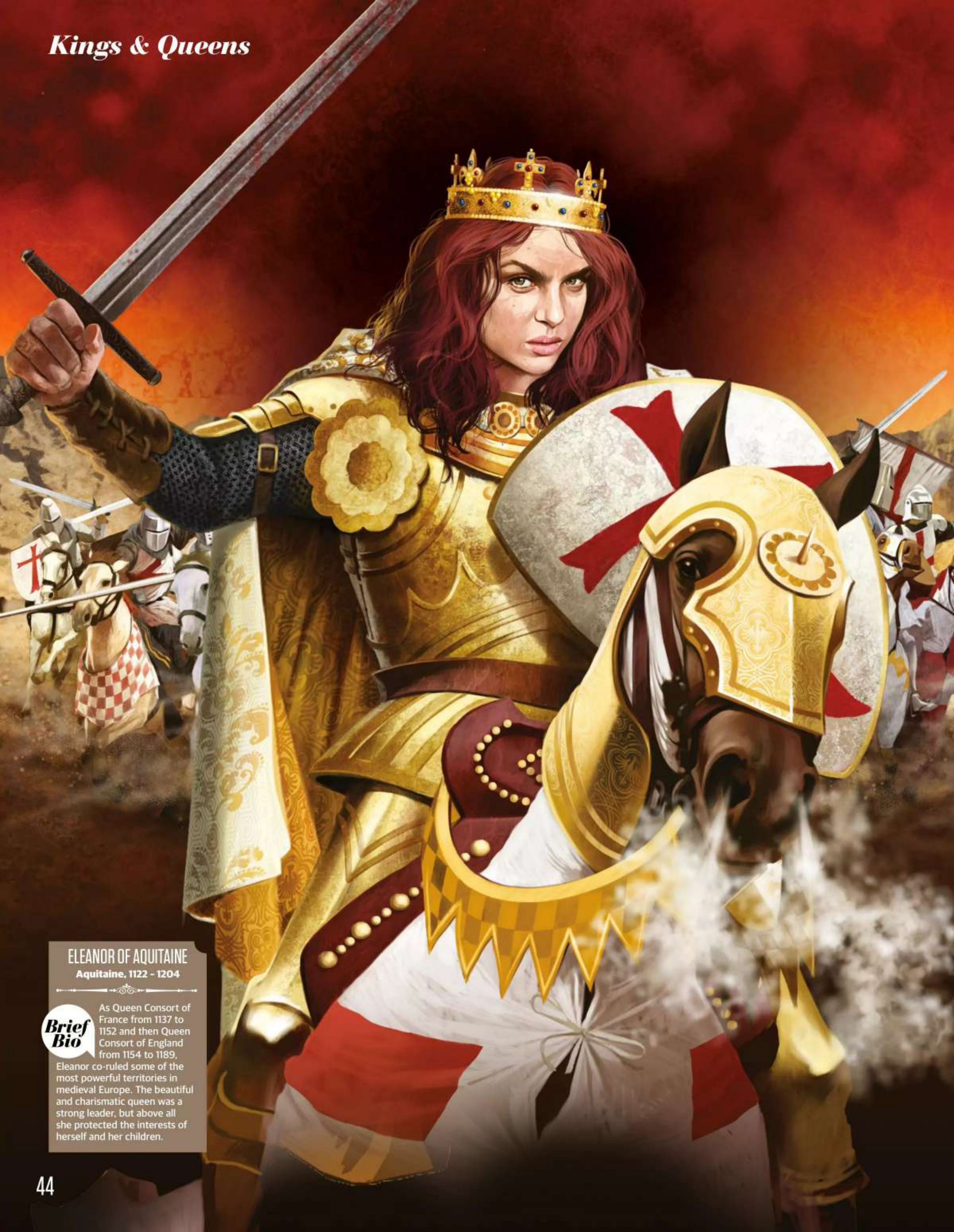
Crowning a new king
With most of Harold's supporters either dead or in flight, William was crowned King William I of England. One of his first actions was to reaffirm the titles and lands of many earls but strip those of Harold's supporters.
25 December 1066

Returning to Normandy
After his coronation, William returned to Normandy to ensure his lands were intact. While there, he had a number of new monasteries built. He also met with most of his nobles and earls, all of whom were eager to learn of possible new wealth and holdings.
1067

Hereward the Wake
Despite promising to leave England for good, Sweyn II of Denmark returned a few months later and joined the growing uprising led by northern theign Hereward the Wake. William forced Sweyn to leave yet again and soon brought this, the last of the northern revolts, to an end.
1070

1087

Death of a king
Despite the relative military success of his reign, his final days were remarkably uneventful. While on a military expedition against France, William either fell from his horse or became ill and died soon after.
9 September 1087



ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE

Aquitaine, 1122 - 1204

Brief Bio As Queen Consort of France from 1137 to 1152 and then Queen Consort of England from 1154 to 1189, Eleanor co-ruled some of the most powerful territories in medieval Europe. The beautiful and charismatic queen was a strong leader, but above all she protected the interests of herself and her children.

1137 – 1204

Eleanor of Aquitaine

Loathed, adored, celebrated and damned, she defied her gender, waged war and became the most powerful woman in Europe

When Pope Eugene III requested that Louis VII, king of France, lead a Crusade to help rescue the Crusader states in the Middle East, he took up the sword with enthusiasm. However, Louis would not travel to the Holy Land alone. His wife, adored by him, despised by others, did not plan to sit back and wait at home for her husband to return. Eleanor of Aquitaine's launch and involvement in the Second Crusade would go down in myth and legend. It is said that the queen rode through the streets of Vézelay dressed in the costume of an Amazon upon a white steed, brandishing her sword and urging the people to join her. Whether it truly occurred or not, this image of the warrior queen has survived through the centuries, and her enduring connection with the Second Crusade would see Eleanor damned for its failure.

When Eleanor fled to marry Henry, she had to avoid being kidnapped and forcibly married by his brother Geoffrey

Eleanor was born to rule. The first child of William X, Duke of Aquitaine, her doting father bestowed upon his eldest daughter education fitting not a submissive queen, but one who would rule. Alongside general household skills and 'womanly' pursuits of embroidery and needlework, she also learned history and arithmetic, she could speak Latin, ride a horse proficiently and was a skilled hunter. She grew up in her grandfather William IX's court, surrounded by music, poetry, and most notably, courtly love. All this bred a girl who was lively, intelligent, confident and headstrong. These were not traits prized in ladies at the time, but they were essential for Eleanor, as she would soon become one of the most powerful heiresses in Europe.

Her only brother died in the spring of 1130, along with her mother. This left Eleanor as the heir presumptive of one of the largest domains in France, larger than those held even by the king. It would not take long for these kingdoms to fall into Eleanor's hands. In 1137, when Eleanor was aged approximately 15, her father went on pilgrimage and left his daughters in the care of the Archbishop of Bordeaux. However, on the journey home, he fell seriously ill and died. Poitou and Aquitaine were now clasped in the hands of a 15-year-old female heir.

All this control was a very dangerous thing for the young teenager to bear. Power-hungry men of the period were not above kidnapping eligible heiresses to seize their lands and claim a title. Eleanor's father knew this, and placed his daughter under the guardianship of King Louis VI of France, also known as Louis the Fat. William's will stipulated that Louis take care of his daughter and her lands until a suitable husband was found. Mortally ill and so obese he was confined to his bed, Louis was very aware of his own impending mortality and did not intend to waste this opportunity. Within hours, Louis arranged for Eleanor to be married to his son, Prince Louis, bringing her ample lands under the control of the French crown.

Louis the Fat married Eleanor off to his son confident in her suitability as a wife. Not only did she come with lands that greatly strengthened the French crown, she was also stunningly beautiful, young, fertile and a lady of court. However, Eleanor was anything but a quiet, submissive wife. Prince Louis was a very pious, meek man, a younger son intended originally for a monastic life, but Eleanor had been trained to rule. She had knowledge beyond her husband's, she was strong where he was weak, forceful where he was relenting, and he was completely and utterly besotted with her. As expected, Louis the Fat shortly died, the prince became King Louis VII and Eleanor became queen of the Franks. Her colourful and high-spirited nature was not well liked in the royal court, and Louis's own mother loathed her daughter in law, believing her to be a bad influence on her son. However, as much as Eleanor's unusual behaviour confused and infuriated the king, he could not resist bending to her every desire.

Sensitive and pious he may have been, but Louis was a king, and a king in the Medieval era could not avoid war. An illicit affair involving Eleanor's younger sister, Petronella, with Raoul I of Vermandois - then married to the daughter of the powerful Stephen of Blois - caused war to break out. With Eleanor's encouragement, Louis supported Petronella and Raoul, and in the resulting conflict, the king was responsible for the burning of the town of Vitry. The terrified townspeople sought refuge in a church, but it also burned to the ground and more than 1,000 people were lost in the flames. The event would have a profound effect on the sensitive Louis, who was plagued by his guilty conscience and the eternal

Guide to the Crusades

From 1096 to 1291, Jerusalem was at the epicentre of a war that killed millions

1st
1096-99
LEVANT, ANATOLIA

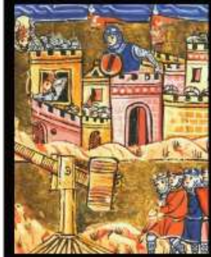
As Turkish forces gained control of the Holy Land, Pope Urban II called for a Crusade to eliminate the threat. Gradually the Christian forces reclaimed Jerusalem. They also began to set up Latin Christian states in the region.

Victors: Crusaders

2nd
1147-49
IBERIA, HOLY LAND, EGYPT

When Edessa, fell, Pope Eugene III encouraged the monarchies of France and Germany to wage war. However, both armies were defeated by the Turks amid claims the Byzantine emperor plotted against the Crusaders.

Victors: Muslims



3rd
1189-92
LEVANT, ANATOLIA

After Jerusalem was conquered by Saladin, Richard I of England and King Philip II of France united to claim it back. They enjoyed a string of successes, notably in the cities of Acre and Jaffa, but failed to capture Jerusalem.

Victors: Mostly Crusaders

4th
1202-04
BALKANS

With Jerusalem still under Muslim control, the Fourth Crusade was launched. Although the aim had been to claim Jerusalem, the Crusaders instead sacked Constantinople, beginning the decline of the Byzantine Empire.

Victors: Crusaders

5th
1213-21
LEVANT, EGYPT

With Hungarian and Austrian armies failing to conquer Jerusalem, Flemish and Frisian forces attempt to claim Ayyubid and prevent the Crusaders having to fight on two fronts. The attack was repelled with huge Crusader losses.

Victors: Muslims

6th
1228-29
CYPRUS, NEAR EAST

With the aim to reclaim Jerusalem, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II used diplomacy and lies to obtain Jerusalem in exchange for a ten-year truce with the Sultan of Egypt. Jerusalem was in Crusader hands.

Victors: Crusaders

7th
1248-54
AL-MANSOURAH, EGYPT

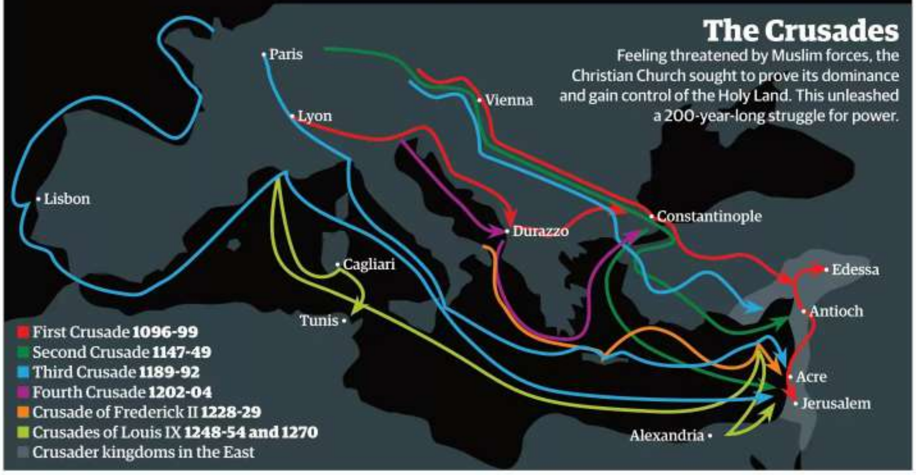
In 1244, Jerusalem returned to Muslim control, so Louis IX of France led a Crusade to get it back. Although they enjoyed initial success, the Crusader forces were defeated and Louis himself captured and ransomed.

Victors: Muslims

8th/9th
1270-72
TUNISIA, NEAR EAST

Louis IX launched a final attempt to reclaim the Holy Land, but became ill on the journey and died. This prompted Edward I to sail to Acre, where he enjoyed victories, but he was forced home to solve conflicts there.

Victors: Muslims



The Crusades

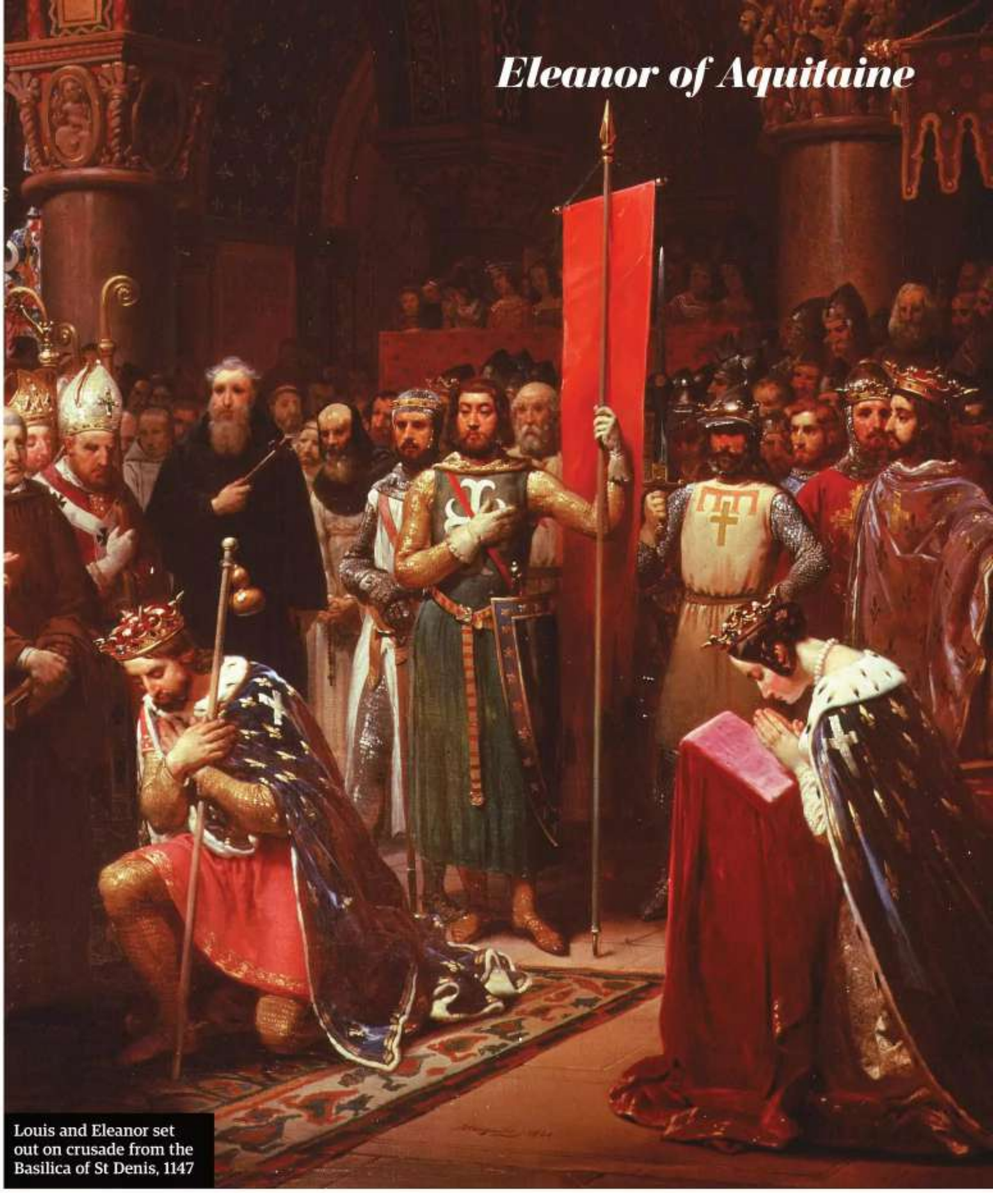
Feeling threatened by Muslim forces, the Christian Church sought to prove its dominance and gain control of the Holy Land. This unleashed a 200-year-long struggle for power.

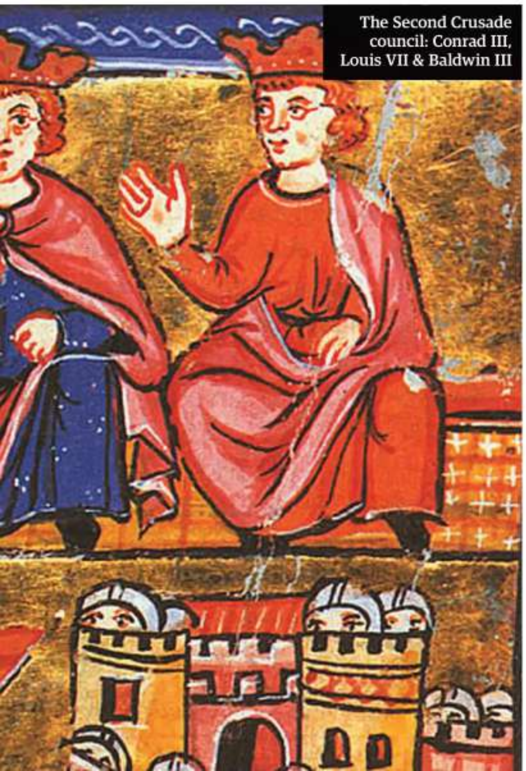
> "She had knowledge beyond her husband's, she was strong where he was weak"

screams of the dying. What Louis needed was a pilgrimage to clear his conscience, and luckily for him, a trip to the Holy Land was just on the horizon, though it would not be quite as peaceful as he hoped. In the autumn of 1145, Pope Eugene III called upon Louis to lead a Crusade to protect the Crusader-owned kingdom of Jerusalem. The king obliged, but he would not be waging war alone.

Eleanor not only decided to join her husband on Crusade, but took up the Crusader cross with, likely, more enthusiasm than he himself. Aged 19, she offered the church the aid of her fighting vassals, which they were very happy to accept. However, they were less than pleased when she proclaimed that she, accompanied by 300 of her ladies in waiting, would join the Crusaders. Eleanor said that she and her ladies would help tend the wounded, but it is also likely that the headstrong queen was not so keen on her meek husband fighting a war without her. She appointed herself leader of her soldiers and departed with her husband.

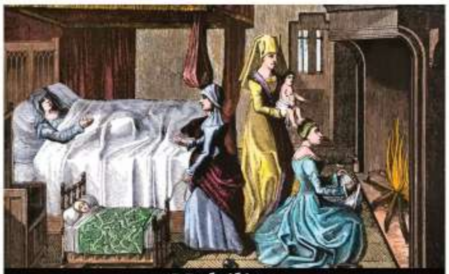
The women were dressed in armour and carried lances, but did not fight. Nevertheless, the prospect of 300 women riding off with warriors was looked upon suspiciously by her contemporaries. However, Eleanor was not one to be swayed by criticism. Although the church may not have approved of her,


Louis and Eleanor set out on crusade from the Basilica of St Denis, 1147


The Second Crusade council: Conrad III, Louis VII & Baldwin III

Growing up in Medieval Europe

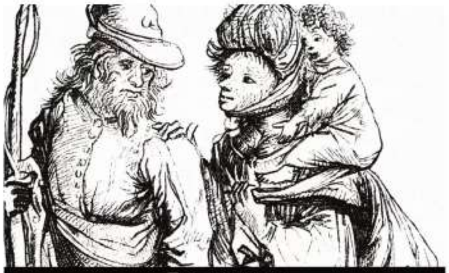
Being born in the Middle Ages meant life was fated to follow a certain path



Nobility

Boys: Sons were sought after to continue the family name, and royal boys were especially prized. Noble boys began training to be a knight aged just seven, and those unsuitable were sent to monasteries. Popular boys' toys were wooden soldiers, toy horses and whips.

Girls: Daughters were seen as expensive, as a dowry had to be paid to the groom at marriage, which could occur as young as seven. Generally noble girls were sent to train as ladies at a young age, learning how to weave, sing, play instruments and how to care for children.



Peasants

Boys: In poorer households, boys helped tend the fields and care for animals. Work was so consuming that children as young as two could be left alone. Poor children did not receive education apart from in the church, and few peasant boys knew how to read.

Girls: Female peasant children were expected to help their mothers with household chores. As they were working hand to mouth, toys were scarce and often handmade. Like their noble counterparts, peasant girls were married off as soon as they reached maturity.

when the army reached Constantinople, the warrior queen quickly impressed, and was compared to the mythical queen of the Amazons.

Unfortunately, the Crusade wasn't going quite so smoothly. The French had been informed by the Byzantine Emperor that their ally, the German King Conrad, had enjoyed victory against a Turkish army. However, as the French army continued their journey onwards, a dazed and ailing Conrad was found near their camp and revealed the truth. The Europeans hadn't won, in fact they had been massacred. It was with haste and some unease that the French and what remained of the German army headed to Antioch, where Eleanor's uncle ruled.

Little did the Crusaders know they were already being stalked by Turks. The French monarchs decided to split, with Louis at the rear of the column with the baggage trains and Eleanor at the front with her vassal, Geoffrey de Rancon. Although the vanguard was able to reach the summit where they planned to make camp, Rancon decided to continue onwards. The rear of the column, laden down with baggage, struggled to keep up and the Turks leapt on this opportunity. The French, including many unarmed pilgrims, were trapped and unprepared. Any who tried to escape were killed, and the king, disguised in simple pilgrim clothes, barely escaped the attack by scaling a rock.

The blame for the massacre was placed firlmy at de Rancon's feet, and, as he was Eleanor's vassal, so it was at her's. The fact that her own soldiers had marched in front and weren't involved did little to help her popularity, and it was even argued that the majority of the baggage was hers. Thus, despite having no involvement in the fight, the queen was blamed for the disaster. Tensions between the royal couple were reaching a fever pitch.

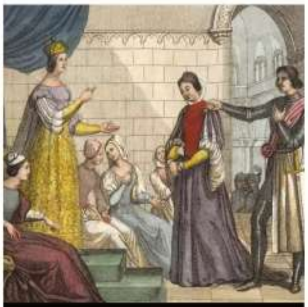
When the Crusaders reached the city of Antioch, it gave Eleanor an opportunity to renew her friendship with the lord of the city and her uncle, Raymond. Not only was Raymond close in age to Eleanor, but he was also tall, handsome and charming. In fact, she spent so much time with her uncle that rumours quickly spread about an illicit affair between the two. Raymond suggested they first capture Edessa, a strategic stronghold in the Holy Land, but Louis was determined to focus solely on Jerusalem. When Eleanor supported her uncle, it was the final straw - the meek, adoring and abiding king had reached his limit.

Louis, likely for the first time in his marriage, demanded that Eleanor follow him. His queen, outraged, called into question the entire marriage, claiming that she and her husband were too closely related, and this was grounds for divorce. This didn't go down well with Louis, and in an effort to establish his authority, he took Eleanor away from her uncle and Antioch against her will and headed to Jerusalem. For the woman who was born to rule, to command and to control, this was humiliating beyond all measure. The remainder of the Crusade achieved little, Louis's subsequent assault on Damascus was a failure, and the royal couple returned to France in different ships.

A marriage where Eleanor was expected to be meek and obliging was not going to work. She could deal with her sensitive and generous husband, but the one that returned from the Crusade was as humiliated as her and increasingly suspicious of the growing relationship between niece and uncle. Although they had children, no male heirs were born, and Louis faced increasing opposition to Eleanor from his barons. The king was left with no option, and in 1152, the marriage was annulled. The lands that Louis's father had so slyly secured for his son were torn away from him, and aged about 30, Eleanor once again became one of the most eligible and desirable heiresses in Europe.

However, Eleanor was no longer a naive 15-year-old, she was a worldly and knowledgeable woman. She knew she would have to remarry, and she intended to do so on her own terms. Amid several attempts of kidnap and forced marriage, she manufactured her own union with Henry, Duke of Normandy and future king of England. Henry wasn't stupid either; he travelled immediately to visit Eleanor, and within eight weeks of her annulment to Louis, she was married to a man even more closely related to her than Louis.

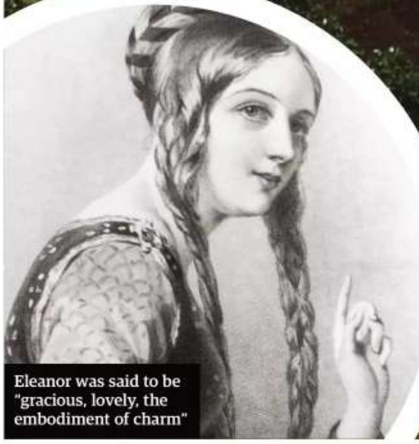
On paper the union was a powerful one. In 1154, Henry became Henry II, king of England, and his lands combined with Eleanor's. This united England, Normandy and the West of France into a



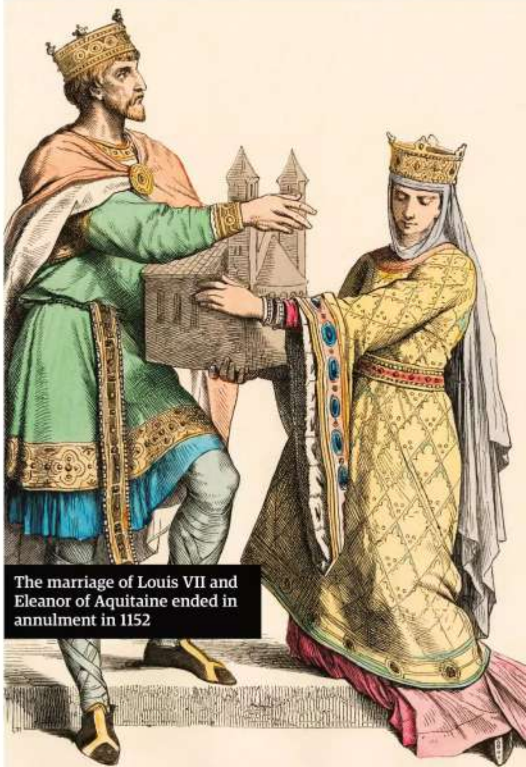
The Court of Love

As well as a Crusader queen, Eleanor was an expert in the art of courtly love

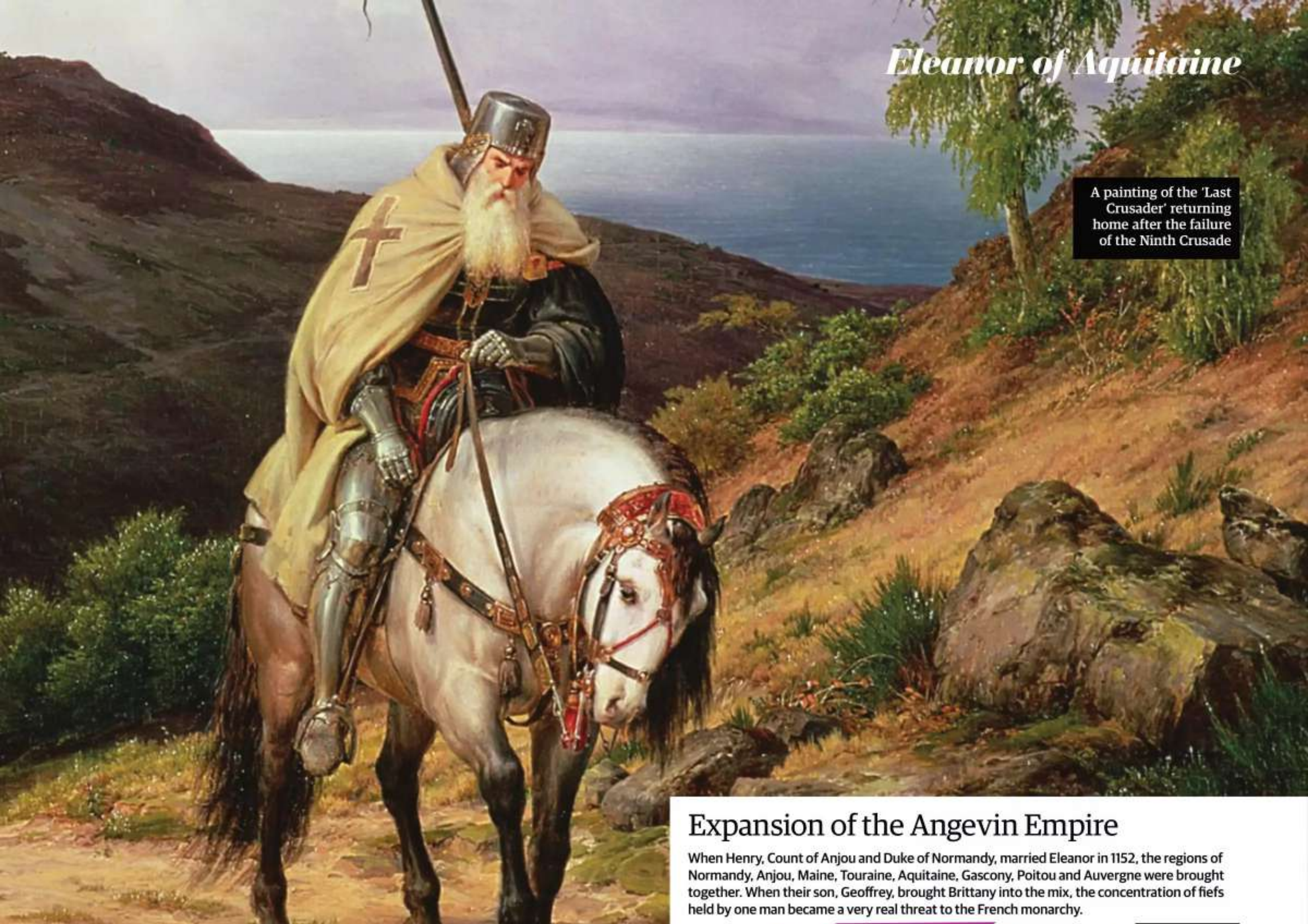
In 1168, Henry II escorted Eleanor to the court of Poitiers, where she remained until 1173. Her time there would profoundly affect the culture of the period. Historians today still debate what exactly unfurled in this 'Court of Love', with some believing that Eleanor, her daughter Marie and other prominent women of the time presided over it as jury. They would listen to lovers' quarrels, resolve them, and seek answers to questions concerning love. 21 different cases have been recorded, debating issues such as whether true love can actually exist within a marriage, with the women concluding it was unlikely. The legend of this courtly love has evolved into the notion that Eleanor was responsible for bringing the ideas of chivalry and courtly love together. However, this is unlikely, as courtly love as a concept was already blossoming before Eleanor's court. It is more likely that the court at Poitiers popularised the idea of courtly love.



Eleanor was said to be "gracious, lovely, the embodiment of charm"



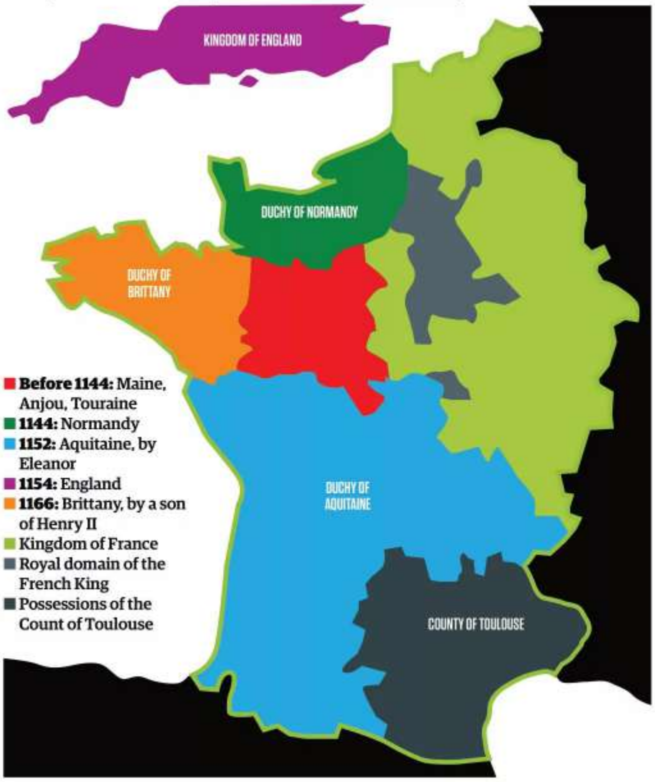
The marriage of Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine ended in annulment in 1152



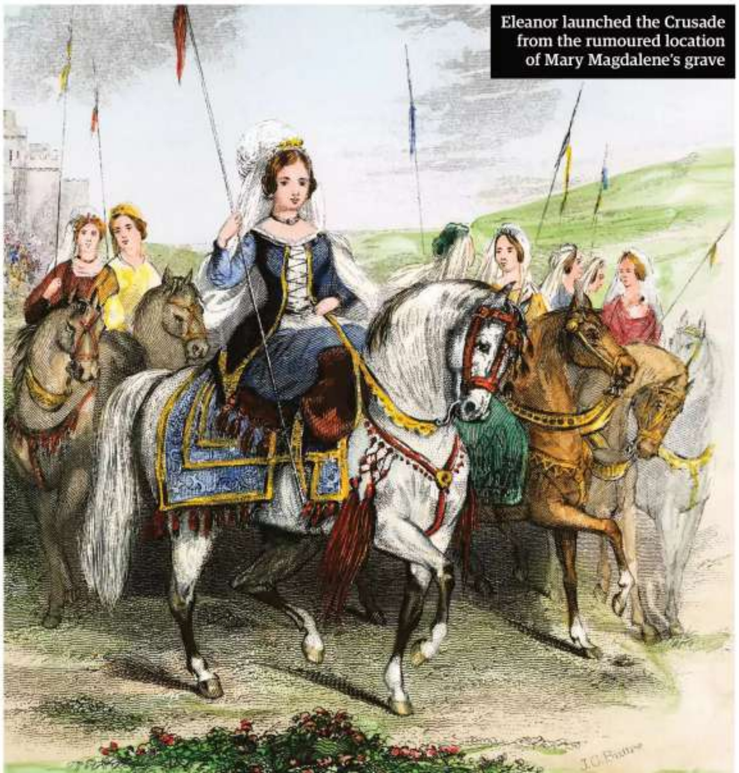
A painting of the 'Last Crusader' returning home after the failure of the Ninth Crusade

Expansion of the Angevin Empire

When Henry, Count of Anjou and Duke of Normandy, married Eleanor in 1152, the regions of Normandy, Anjou, Maine, Touraine, Aquitaine, Gascony, Poitou and Auvergne were brought together. When their son, Geoffrey, brought Brittany into the mix, the concentration of fiefs held by one man became a very real threat to the French monarchy.


KINGDOM OF ENGLAND
DUCHY OF NORMANDY
DUCHY OF BRITTANY
DUCHY OF AQUITAINE
COUNTY OF TOULOUSE

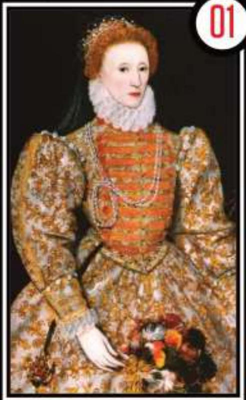
- 🟥 **Before 1144:** Maine, Anjou, Touraine
- 🟩 **1144:** Normandy
- 🟦 **1152:** Aquitaine, by Eleanor
- 🟪 **1154:** England
- 🟧 **1166:** Brittany, by a son of Henry II
- 🟩 Kingdom of France
- ■ Royal domain of the French King
- ■ Possessions of the Count of Toulouse



Eleanor launched the Crusade from the rumoured location of Mary Magdalene's grave

10 MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN HISTORY

Powerful men fill the history books, but in every single era of history, women have also dominated and ruled



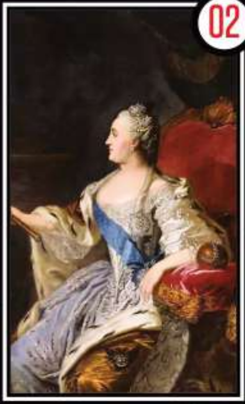
01

1533-1603
ELIZABETH I

QUEEN OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND

Crowning achievement: Defeating the Spanish Armada, greatly boosting national pride and putting a stop to Spain's invasion of England.

Did you know? Elizabeth's refusal to marry was so extraordinary for the period that many believed the only explanation was that she was secretly a man.



02

1729-96
CATHERINE II

EMPRESS AND AUTOCRAT OF ALL THE RUSSIAS

Crowning achievement: Catherine ruled over Russia for longer than any other female ruler, during which time she expanded the Russian Empire to the Black Sea and defeated the Ottoman Empire twice.

Did you know? Her name wasn't Catherine and she wasn't Russian. She was born as Sophia to an impoverished Prussian prince.

03

1370-1330 BCE
NEFERTITI

QUEEN CONSORT OF EGYPT

Crowning achievement: In the male-dominated world of Ancient Egypt, Nefertiti achieved near equal status with her husband, Pharaoh Akhenaten, and received the title 'Priest of Aten'.

Did you know? Nefertiti is known for the beautiful bust of her face, but CT scans have revealed that beneath lies a carving of a wrinkled woman with an uneven nose.

04

1835-1908
EMPRESS DOWAGER CIXI

EMPRESS DOWAGER OF QING CHINA

Crowning achievement: One of the most powerful women in China's long history, she was regent for her son and nephew, but held the real power for nearly 50 years.

Did you know? Her true nature is a mystery, with some painting her as a ruthless murderer and others claiming that she was an enlightened ruler.

05

1953-2007
BENAZIR BHUTTO

PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN

Crowning achievement: Not only the first woman to head a major political party in a Muslim majority nation, but the first elected head of an Islamic country.

Did you know? She refused to change her name when she was married, stating: "Benazir Bhutto doesn't cease to exist the moment she gets married. I am not giving myself away. I belong to myself."

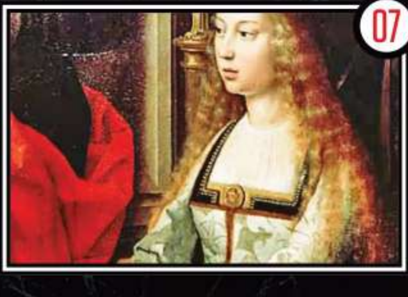
06

1954-PRESENT
OPRAH WINFREY

'QUEEN OF ALL MEDIA'

Crowning achievement: Born into poverty, Winfrey is now the most successful black philanthropist in American history and is regarded by many as the most influential woman in the world.

Did you know? Although she's one of the richest women in the world, growing up Oprah was bullied at school for wearing dresses made from potato sacks.



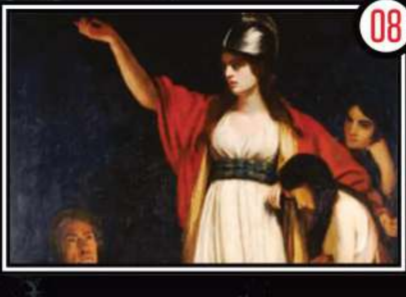
07

1451-1504
ISABELLA I OF CASTILE

QUEEN OF CASTILE AND LEÓN

Crowning achievement: She not only set up the unification of Spain with her marriage, but also cleared her kingdom of the crippling debt left by her brother.

Did you know? One of Isabella's daughters was Catherine of Aragon, none other than Henry VIII's first wife.



08

UNKNOWN- C. 61 CE
BOUDICA

QUEEN OF THE ICENI TRIBE

Crowning achievement: Uniting many British tribes to revolt against the occupying Roman army, she led her force to defeat the Romans in three battles.

Did you know? It wasn't until the Victorian Era that Boudica earned legendary status, as hers and Victoria's name were identical in meaning.

09

1954-PRESENT
ANGELA MERKEL

CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY

Crowning achievement: As well as being the first woman to serve in her position, she is known as the 'decider' in her handling of the financial crisis and is also viewed as the de facto leader of the EU.

Did you know? In 2019, Merkel topped the *Forbes* list of the world's most powerful women for the ninth consecutive year.

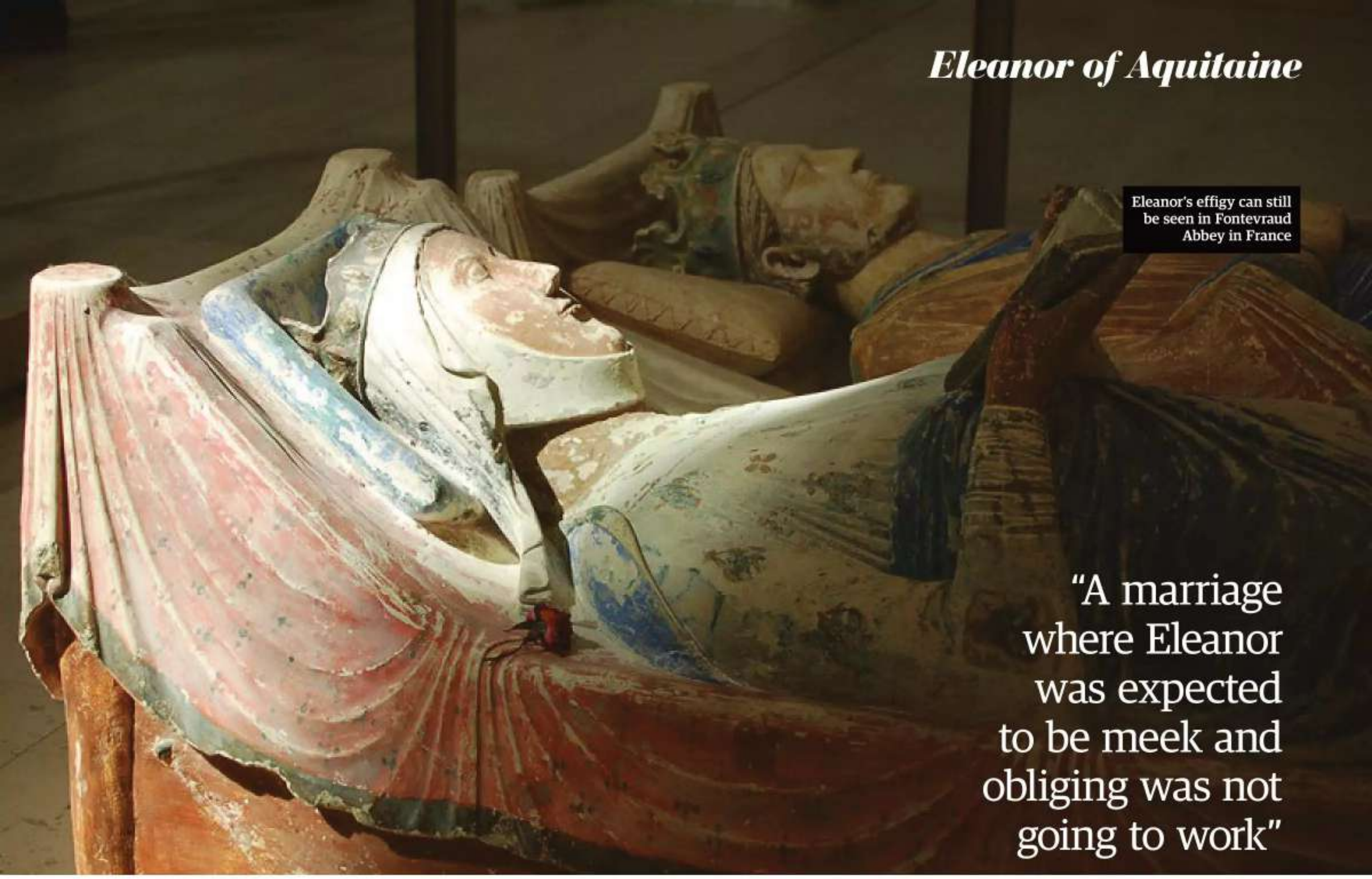
10

1819-1901
QUEEN VICTORIA

QUEEN OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, EMPRESS OF INDIA

Crowning achievement: Queen Victoria ruled over the largest empire in the history of the world, spanning six continents and over 400 million people.

Did you know? Despite her imposing presence, Victoria was barely five foot tall.

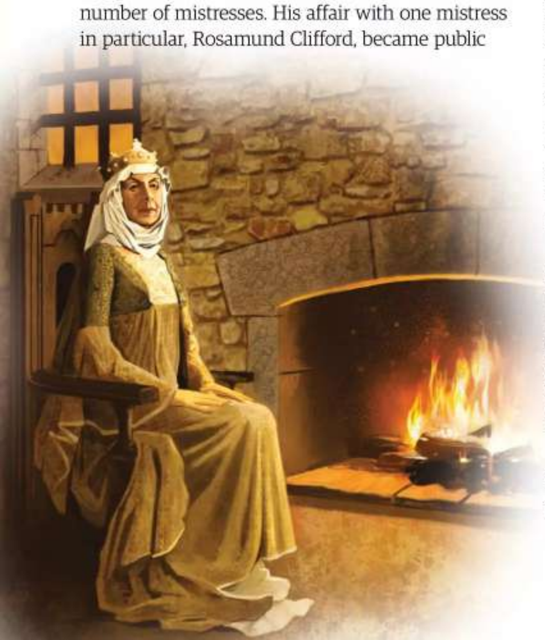


Eleanor's effigy can still be seen in Fontevraud Abbey in France

> "A marriage where Eleanor was expected to be meek and obliging was not going to work"

hugely powerful and influential kingdom. However, both Henry and Eleanor were strong, dominating characters. Henry was the eldest child; he too had been born to rule. He was used to getting his way and had an explosive and at times terrifying temper. Eleanor was 11 years older than him, knew her worth, and wasn't prepared to obey the commands of a domineering husband. Despite their stormy relationship, the couple had five sons and three daughters, and ruled over an impressive Medieval empire.

However, a storm was brewing. Henry was ruled by passion, and this led to many illicit affairs and a number of mistresses. His affair with one mistress in particular, Rosamund Clifford, became public knowledge and drove his proud and headstrong wife to breaking point. Eleanor departed for her native land of Aquitaine and took several of her children, including Richard, her chosen heir, with her. The queen was tired of dealing with the wills of husbands; she wanted to rule Aquitaine, and she wanted to rule alone.



Eleanor wasn't the only one who had been pushed to the limit by Henry. Several of her sons had inherited her proud, stubborn nature and decided that enough was enough. Henry the younger secretly travelled to Aquitaine and, likely encouraged by Eleanor, joined with two of his brothers, Richard and Geoffrey. Together they decided to rebel against their father. For Eleanor the rebellion was the culmination of years of abiding his infidelities, bearing his children and a lifetime of sharing power; it was her chance to rule Aquitaine with her beloved son Richard. But, as always with Eleanor, fate did not run smooth. The rebellion was squashed, and the woman born to rule was thrown in prison.

For the next 16 years Eleanor was imprisoned in England. If the humiliation wasn't bad enough, the lack of contact with her sons over the years caused Eleanor to become distanced from them. Now aged 50, Eleanor hopelessly and powerlessly waited for her chance to rule again. It would take the death of her tempestuous husband for her to finally glimpse freedom once more.

When Henry died in 1189, Richard I became heir. Although Eleanor's favourite son had become more distant, one of his first acts was to release his mother from prison. In the autumn of her life, Eleanor could finally fulfil the role she was born to play - ruler. While Richard, who would become known as Richard the Lionheart, travelled and embarked on the Third Crusade, she ruled England as regent. She defended his lands, and even used her political acumen to negotiate Richard's release when he was captured. Her citizens approved of their able, intelligent and strong queen, and, although it was likely no concern to her, Eleanor finally earned popularity.

The queen was not one to let old age stop her. She continually travelled across Europe, cementing powerful marriages for her brood of children, managing her army and building a strong and influential empire. At the age of 70, she rode over the Pyrenees to collect her choice of wife for Richard, then continued to traverse the Alps. She would outlive nearly all of her children, and survived long into the reign of her youngest son, John. However, determined as she was, Eleanor could not avoid time catching up with her. She retired to the religious house of Fontevraud where she became a nun. In 1204, aged 82, Eleanor died and was buried beside the son she adored, Richard. Her legacy would continue not only in the children she bore, but in her lands, which remained loyal to England even after the loss of Normandy. Though many were quick to discount her for her frivolity in her youth, she had proved herself an intelligent, driven and wise ruler. As the nuns who spent her final years with her wrote, she was a queen "who surpassed almost all the queens of the world."

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1189 – 1199

Richard the Lionheart

Richard the Lionheart was the most famous Christian king of the Medieval period, waging a religious war against the Muslim East, attempting to conquer the Holy Land and Kingdom of Jerusalem

One of the most bloodthirsty, tactically astute and arguably wise kings that England ever saw, King Richard I - famously known as Richard the Lionheart - took the military might of the Medieval Christian West into the heart of the Islamic East in order to re-conquer the Holy Land (Palestine) from the Sultan of Syria, Saladin. Indeed, with his Third Crusade - often referred to as 'Richard's Crusade' - the English King led literally thousands of knights thousands of miles into a territory that had long been fraught with religious tension and then, through a series of military victories, heightened those further, cutting a hole not just through the rival troops of Saladin but also through Islam itself.

For Richard though, the quest to the Holy Land was but part of a life that was characterised by conflict and combat, with him born into one of the most infamous dynasties in Europe, the House of Plantagenet. Son of King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, Richard was born into a family famous for feuding, with his father's legacy of fighting with all and sundry, including his own wife who he ended up imprisoning in a house-arrest situation due to her strong influence over not just his sons but also many of the barons and nobility in England and specifically France. As such, it is no surprise that during his early years not only did he fight against his father but also, following the pair briefly reconciling, against his father's kingdom's own barons he put down a series of revolts.

Indeed, by the time Richard successfully took down the supposedly impregnable fortress of Taillebourg in the spring of 1179 while fighting rebels, he had won a reputation as a highly skilled military commander and fierce combatant, with an infamous reputation of cruelty and brutality against anyone who stood against him. His hunger for conquest however did not stop in defeating rebels; soon after the revolts had been quelled Richard challenging his father for the throne. This led Richard to end up not just fighting his father but also his brothers, with only the passing of his older brothers Henry and Geoffrey as well as eventually his father allowing him to ascend as King.

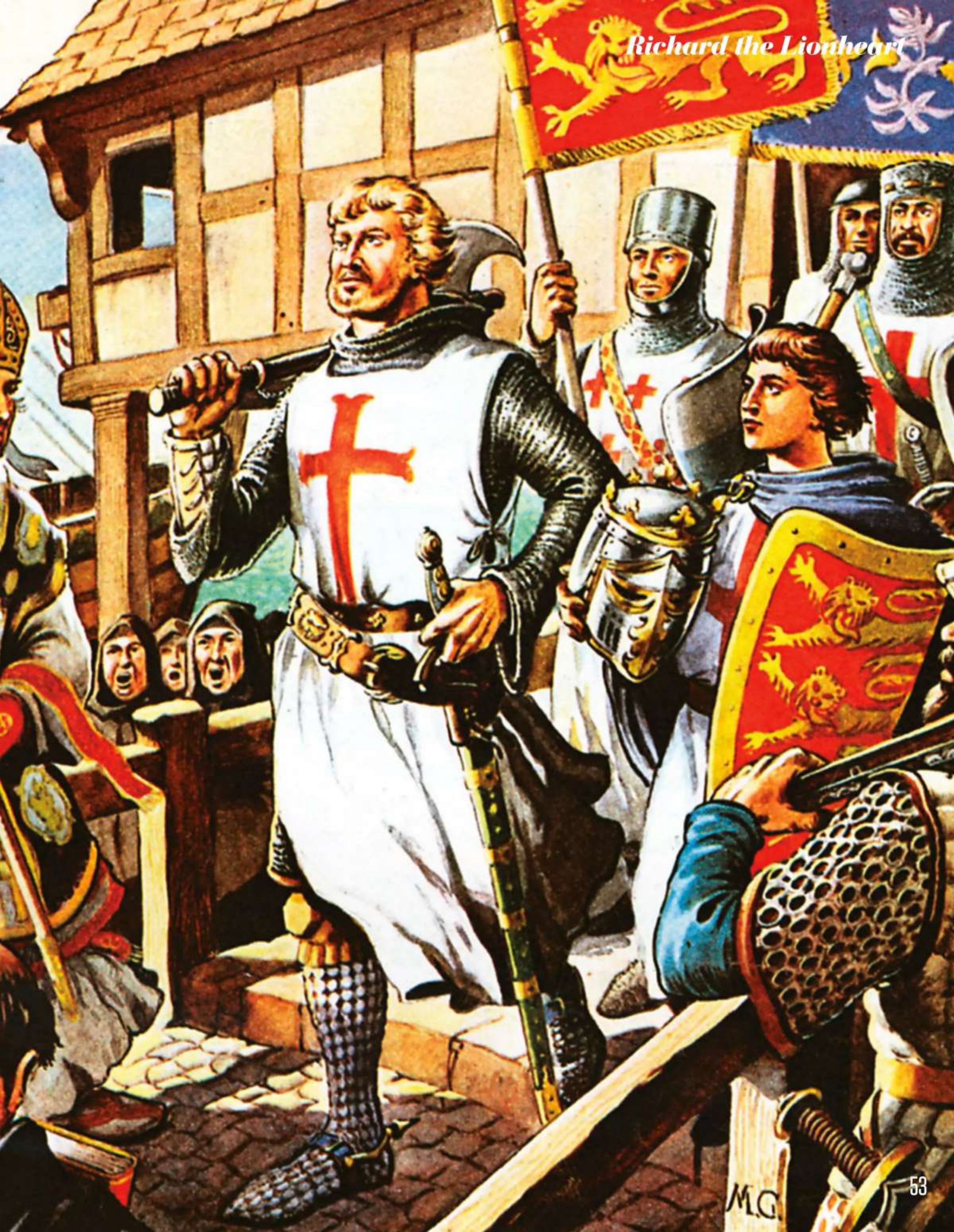
> "He led thousands of knights thousands of miles into a territory that had long been fraught with religious tension"

RICHARD I

England, 1157 – 1199

Brief Bio

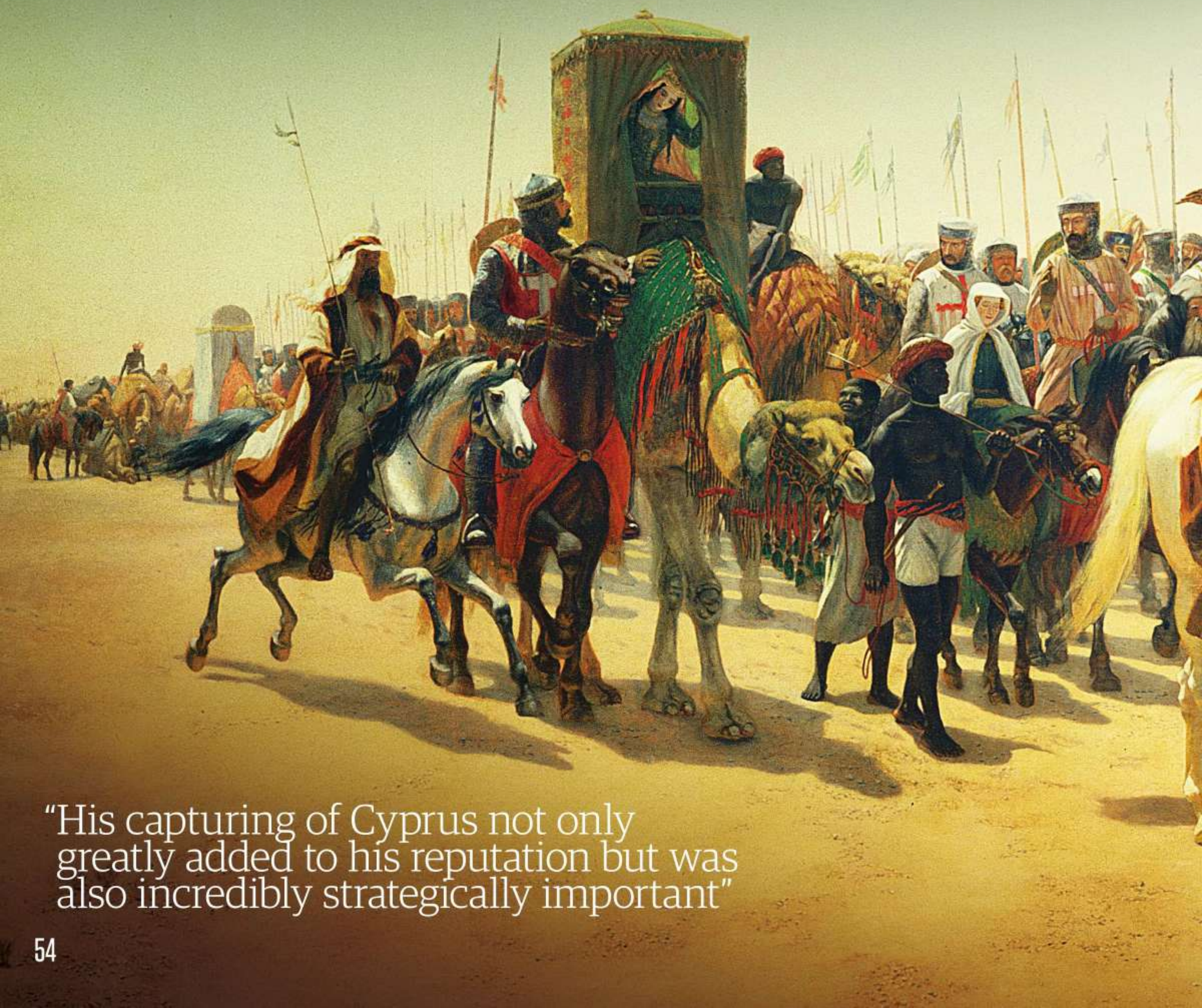
Nicknamed 'the Lionheart' for his ferocity and faith, the son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine was obsessed with the Crusades, prosecuting a holy war in the Middle East to achieve Christian control of the Holy Land, particularly Jerusalem. He figures in many myths, notably *Robin Hood*.


M.G.

Having been born in England, Richard was officially invested as Duke of Normandy and then crowned King of England on 3 September 1189 at Westminster Abbey. Now finally free from the constraints of fighting his family and the rebels in his territories in England and France, Richard was free to undertake what had, since 1187 when he had taken the Christian cross as Count of Poitou (something he had done to renounce his past wickedness) and Saladin had taken Jerusalem, been his primary aim - retake the Holy Land from its Muslim rulers. The problem was, while Richard's will and desire for combat was unabated by years of conflict, his inherited kingdom was not, with the royal coffers largely empty.

Richard therefore immediately set about raising the necessary funds to launch his own crusader army. Firstly, he agreed with King Philip II of France to undertake the crusade jointly - with both leaders scared that if one left Europe then the other would invade his territories - and then proceeded to raise taxes in England, free King William I of Scotland from his oath of subservience in exchange for 10,000 marks, and sell much land and property, with the proceeds being funnelled into assembling an army of 4,000 knights, 4,000 foot-soldiers and a huge fleet of ships. At one point Richard reportedly said that 'I would have sold London if I could find a buyer', so determined was he to proceed on the Third Crusade. This large army was to travel with Phillip's to Palestine and retake Jerusalem at any cost. Boarding his flagship, Richard I left England in the summer of 1190.

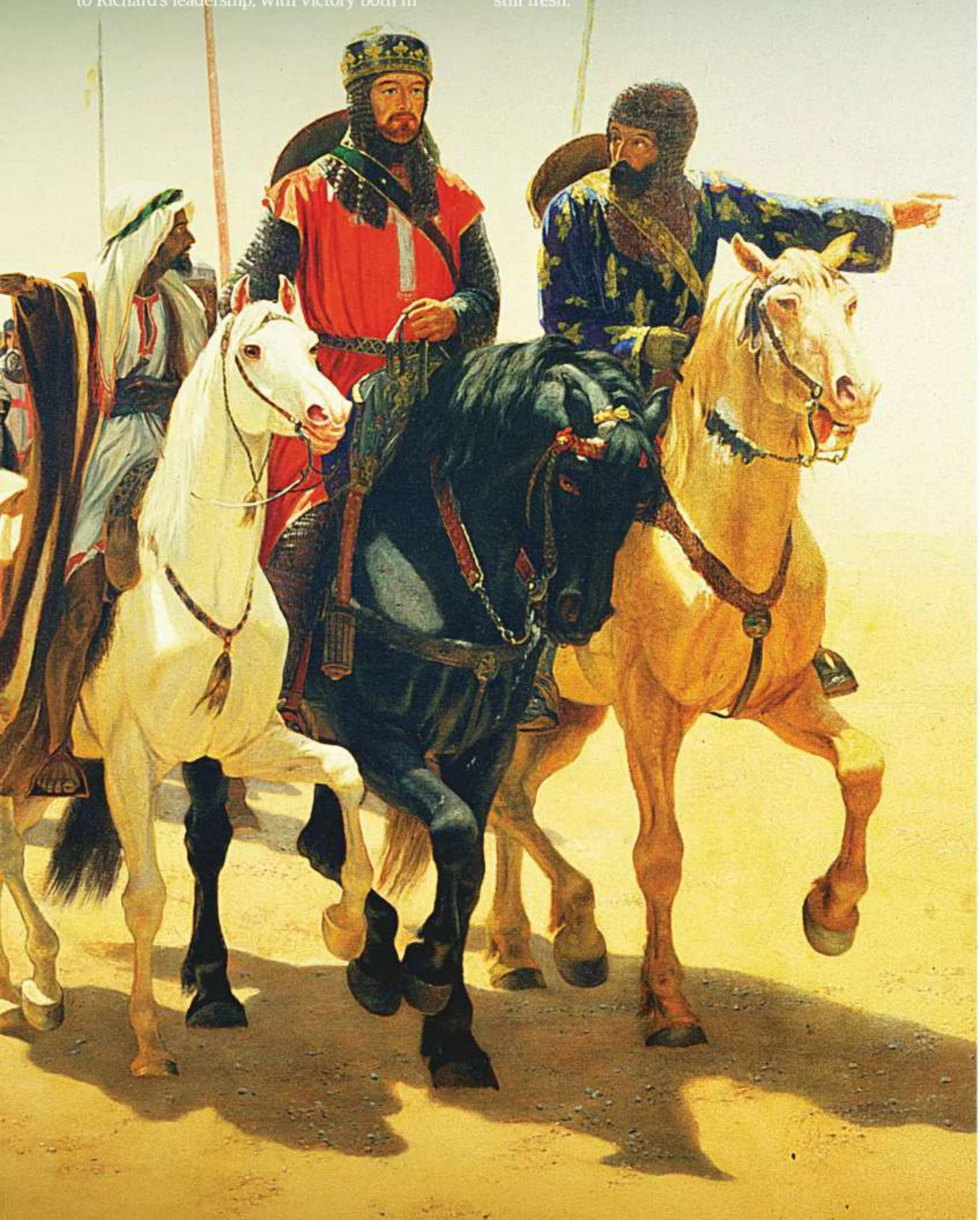
As can be seen in greater detail in the column on the right, his passage to the Holy Land was eventful, with him first stopping in Sicily - where he famously freed his sister from the usurper King Tancred I - but then also conquered the entirety of the island nation of Cyprus, overthrowing the despot ruler Isaac Komnenos and installing Richard de Camville and Robert of Thornham as its governors (interestingly he later sold the island to the Knights Templar, where it was then sold to Guy of Lusignan, one of Richard's fellow crusaders). Indeed, while as we shall see, Richard made many conquests in the Holy Land, his capturing of Cyprus not only greatly added to his reputation but was also strategically incredibly important, allowing the waters on the approach to Palestine to be controlled by Christian forces.



"His capturing of Cyprus not only greatly added to his reputation but was also incredibly strategically important"

Despite multiple conquests and himself even getting married on his journey into the East, Richard eventually arrived in the Holy Land at the city of Acre on 8 June 1191. He immediately joined forces with Guy of Lusignan and Conrad of Montferrat and took the city in the now-famous 1191 Siege of Acre. As his and his allies' flags were raised above the city, Richard's Crusade had well and truly begun, with what was to be the first of several victorious conquests now firmly under his belt. Buoyed by his victory, Richard soon left Acre and marched south with his Crusader army, fearing that if Jerusalem was to be taken successfully, then this military momentum needed to be maintained.

Momentum was indeed maintained thanks to Richard's leadership, with victory both in the Battle of Arsuf and at Beit Nuba, leaving the Crusader army a mere 12 miles from their ultimate destination of Jerusalem. By this point, Richard's multiple victories had left morale in Saladin's forces low and it has since been postulated that if the army had directly besieged the city it would have fallen to them quickly. However, news of a possible Muslim relief army and poor weather led to Richard ordering the army to retreat back toward the coast, with him fearing that if they tried to take the city right now they might become trapped and wiped out. Returning to the captured city of Ascalon, Richard fortified his position. It was here where he would make the first of multiple negotiations with Saladin, however at this stage they were unsuccessful, with the invasion still fresh.



The lion roars: Richard's top five victories

Messina (4 October 1190)

Arriving in Sicily to see his sister, Queen Joan, freed from prison, he proceeded to attack and capture the historic city of Messina. After looting it of every penny and burning it to the ground, Richard set up his base there, eventually forcing Joan's captor Tancred to sign a treaty ensuring Joan's release, an inheritance of 20,000 ounces of gold, and his nephew Arthur of Brittany enshrined as Tancred's heir. Richard proceeded to spend much of the year in Sicily.

Cyprus (1 May 1191)

Heading for Acre, a storm disrupted it and many ships landed on the south coast of Cyprus. Cyprus' despot ruler Isaac Komnenos proceeded to take Richard's sister prisoner. Richard, having finally discovered the stricken ships, arrived at the port of Lemesos and demanded his troops and sister to be released. Komnenos refused and so Richard landed his army, took the port and then the entire island nation, capturing Isaac and placing him in silver chains (the chains were silver as he promised not to place him in irons).

Acre (July 1191)

After landing in the Holy Land on 8 June, two weeks after his travelling companion Philip of Alsace, Richard proceeded to join him in the now famous siege of Acre. Richard finally secured the city's surrender on 12 July after weeks of combat, with the Christian troops entering the city and imprisoning the Muslim garrison. Richard, along with fellow Crusader Conrad of Montferrat, raised the banners of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, France, England and the Duchy of Austria.

Arsuf (7 September 1191)

Having left Acre, Richard proceeded south and was engaged by Saladin's forces at Arsuf in Palestine. Following a series of attacks by Saladin's forces, Richard charged the main body of Saladin's troops in a bold counter attack that broke their ranks. Importantly, while this victory gained Richard no resources, it did result in the coastal area of southern Palestine falling to him, making an assault on Jerusalem possible.

Jaffa (8 August 1192)

Richard lead a daring assault on the besieged city of Jaffa, which had been taken a month earlier by Saladin. Leading just 54 knights, a few hundred infantry and about 2,000 crossbowmen into battle, Richard caused the city's Muslim garrison to panic and then flee from the city, with Saladin himself unable to regroup them until they were five miles away. Saladin attempted a counter-attack, but it was in vain, his forces exhausted from years of warfare. After this battle that a peace treaty was agreed on by Richard and Saladin.

In June of 1192, Richard's Crusader army once more advanced towards Jerusalem, an action catalysed by the assassination of Conrad of Montferrat by the Hashshashin, an elite group of Islamic assassins. This time the Crusader army came in sight of the great city, however, due to disagreements between its component leaders on how best to proceed - Richard and the bulk of the crusading leaders wanted to force Saladin to hand over Jerusalem by attacking his base of power in Egypt, while the French Duke of Burgundy wished to make a direct attack on the city - they were once more forced to make a tactical retreat. Saladin attempted to punish the crusader's indecision by attacking them in a series of harassing running engagements, however the army stood strong and following another decisive victory at the Battle of Jaffa on 8 August 1192, both Saladin's and Richard's armies were heavily depleted.

A stalemate of inactivity ensued, with both Richard and Saladin realising their positions within Palestine were fragile and that continued fighting was unattainable. Another bout of negotiations between the two leaders proceeded and - as can be seen in greater detail in 'Richard VS Saladin: An Eternal War' to the right - finally a peace treaty was agreed upon on 2 September 1192. The treaty decreed that Richard would not take Jerusalem, however Christian pilgrims and merchants would be now free to enter the Muslim-held city as they wished completely lawfully. This would be how the Third Christian Crusade would come to an end, with Richard soon after departing the Holy Land for his homeland.

The story of Richard's Crusade, however, was not quite over with his departure from Palestine. His ship wrecked near Aquileia, Italy, and forced him to return over land through central Europe. It was during this land voyage that, as he passed by Vienna shortly before Christmas 1192, he was captured by the forces of Leopold V, Duke of Austria, who accused Richard of arranging the murder of his cousin Conrad of Montferrat by assassins back in the Holy Land. Richard proclaimed his innocence, but it was ignored by the Duke and Richard was imprisoned in Dürnstein Castle by the Duke, an action that saw him excommunicated by the pope. Regardless of the excommunication, Leopold V handed Richard over to Henry VI, the Holy Roman Emperor, who then

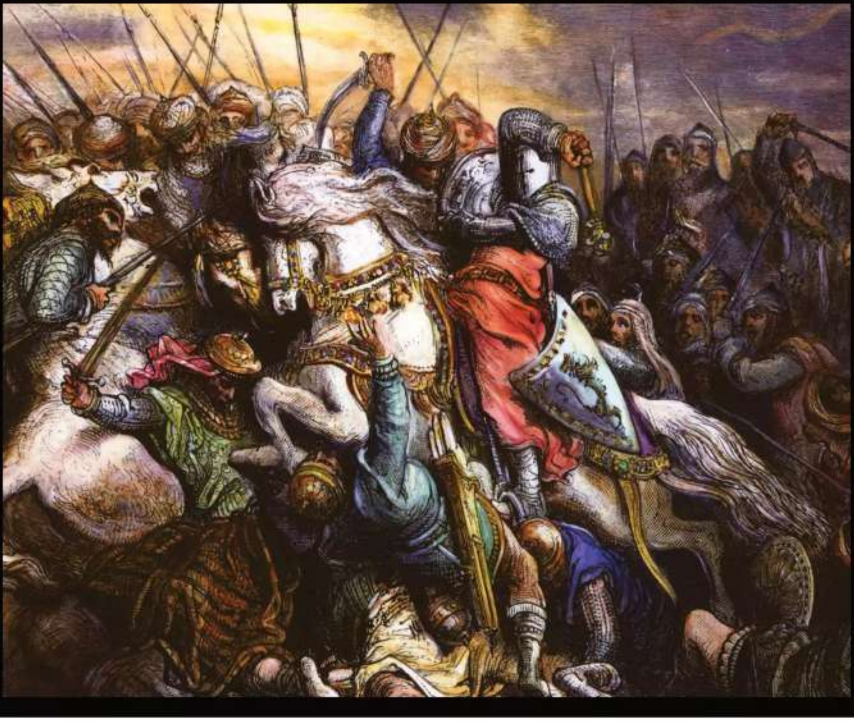
Richard vs Saladin: An Eternal War

Richard's crusade was one of the most personal of all, with what began as a duel of religions evolving into one between two of history's greatest leaders

While the Third Crusade was in fact one of the most complicated in terms of participants, with everyone from Philip II of France through to the Italian Conrad of Monteferrat and Guy of Luisgnan taking up arms to take the Holy Land, it was largely determined and eventually ended by just two men, King Richard I of England and Sultan of Syria Saladin. Indeed, some with the pair directing troops from afar, Richard and Saladin clashed more than ten times during the Third Crusade, with both taking or retaking territory in a continuous tug of war throughout the Palestine region. In the Battles of Arsuf and Jaffa both men were active participants in the field, with both winning much renown for their personal combat prowess.

Interestingly, however, while both Richard and Saladin spent much of the Third Crusade directing combat against each other, they were reportedly also great admirers of each other's abilities and met multiple times during the hostilities in attempts to negotiate over matters. In fact, it was through one of these negotiations after the Battle of Jaffa that the Third Crusade finally came to an end, with Richard agreeing to demilitarise Christian-controlled regions and Saladin ensuring that Christian pilgrims and merchants could have access to Jerusalem. Military historians often point to Richard and Saladin's relationship as a key factor in more bloodshed not being spilt, arguably without their work the Third Crusade would have been prolonged.

As a footnote, little more than six months after Richard the Lionheart left the Holy Land after the two great men had agreed on a peace treaty, Saladin died of fever on 4 March 1193 in Damascus. As with Richard, who would return slowly to his homeland without wealth or ceremony, Saladin himself died with only one piece of gold and 40 pieces of silver to his name, the rest given away to his subjects or spent on the proceeding years of war. Clearly, for peace - no matter how temporary - it was a price worth paying.



Timeline

1157

- **Richard born**
  Richard is born at Beaumont Palace, Oxford, England as the son of King Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. He is one of four brothers including Henry, Geoffrey and John.
  8 September 1157
- **Aquitaine gained**
  Following him turning ten, Richard is invested with the duchy of Aquitaine and then, four years later, the duchy of Poitiers.
  1168
- **Richard argues**
  After arguing with his brothers, Richard joins his forces with those of his father to subdue Henry, Geoffrey and their rebelling barons.
  1179
- **Henry dies**
  Henry II's rightful heir to the throne - Henry the Young King - dies of dysentery, leaving Richard to become the rightful heir. Three years later Richard's other brother, Geoffrey, dies in a tournament.
  1183

- **Richard crowned**
  Following the death of Henry II at Chateau Chinon, Richard is crowned King in Westminster Abbey, England.
  3 September 1189
- **Fire sale**
  Having heard of Saladin's capture of Jerusalem, Richard begins raising funds for his crusade by selling off castles and territory in his control.
  11 December 1189

> "Returning to England, Richard found that his brother had tried to take the throne with the help of the French King Philip"

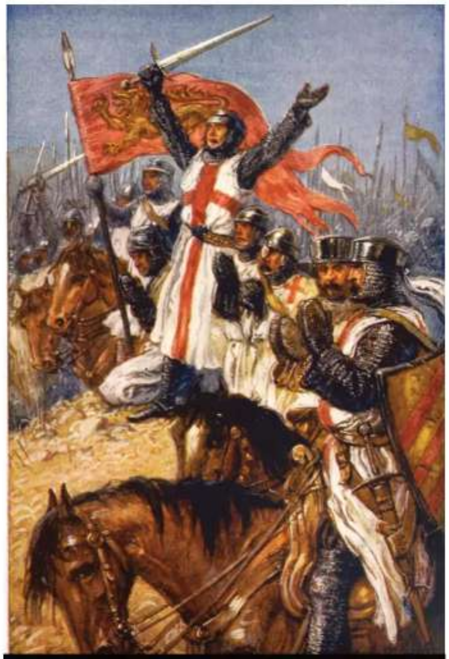
held him to ransom, demanding 150,000 marks for Richard's release.

His mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine proceeded to raise the large sum, though it took almost two years, with Richard only finally being freed on 4 February 1194. Upon returning to England and France, Richard found that his brother John had tried to take the throne with the help of French King Philip and that much of his territory in Normandy had been taken. He immediately began a campaign of reconquest, forming an alliance against King Philip and then beating him in multiple battles throughout the 1190s, the most famous being the Battle of Gisors, a conflict in which Richard coined the now famous motto of the British monarchy 'Dieu et mon Droit', which translates as 'God and my Right', an indication that the monarch only answers to God.

As is related in 'Death in his mother's arms' to the right, this new campaign of conquest would end with Richard's own death, which came from a very unlikely source. Regardless though, upon his death his was eventually succeeded by his brother John, who would proceed to lose almost all of Richard's territory in mainland Europe and then go on to lose much more power by losing the First Baron's War in 1217, the latter leading to the creation of the Magna Carta. Indeed, following Richard's death on 6 April 1199, no king of England ever held as much power or territory than he did during his reign.

So what of Richard's legacy? One of the most powerful Kings of England in the country's long history, Richard was born into a firmly established - albeit warring - empire where the monarch's position as ruler was unquestionable. He was, as he said himself, answerable to no one but the Christian God and held the military might and privilege to do as he wished on Earth. Despite the romance surrounding his famous Crusade, as well as the scandalous family politics that coloured his life and his favourable rule when compared to his brother John, it can be easily argued that the legacy left by Richard is not a positive one, with him spending vast sums of his subjects' money on a series of wars either for his own personal gain or in the pursuit of religious zealotry and intolerance.

But perhaps that is to look upon Richard's actions with a modern perspective, one that is wholly unsuitable to decode the motives and mindset of the Medieval world. There is no doubt about it, life and death were very much part of the same blade during Richard's rule, with those who did not adequately defend themselves put to the sword for no fault of their own aside from that they stood in someone else's way. Regardless of his legacy though, one thing is clear, Richard's actions had a marked effect not just on Europe but on the western Middle East too, one that can still be seen today if you look in the right places.



Crusaders under Richard I gain sight of Jerusalem, though they were unable to seize it from the Saracens

Death in his mother's arms

The climactic events of Richard the Lionheart's death

In March 1199, long after the Third Crusade had come to a close, Richard was back in Limousin, suppressing a revolt against his rule by Viscount Aimar V of Limoges. Burning the count's land and cutting through his troops, Richard finally arrived at the small and barely defended castle of Chalus-Chabrol, and he set about besieging it. On the evening of the 25 March, Richard was walking around the castle's perimeter investigating the progress that his sappers were making on the castle walls. He was walking unarmoured and, despite missiles occasionally being fired down, they were given little attention, with Richard even amused by the amateur state of the castle's defenders, applauding when they aimed at him.

For Richard however, this was to be the beginning of the end, with another unseen bowmen shooting and finally hitting Richard in the left shoulder near the neck. Richard, who despite being hit, walked to his tent and attempted to remove the bolt. However, he failed and only after a surgeon had come was the bolt finally removed. The would quickly became gangrenous and upon realising that his life was soon to end Richard called for the now-captured crossbowmen to be brought to him. The crossbowman was not a man but just a boy, who told Richard that he had acted out of revenge for the death of his father and two brothers, both of whom had been killed by the king's forces. Expecting to be executed however, the boy was then surprised by the weak and dying King Richard who, in what was to be his last act of mercy on Earth, forgave the boy and pardoned him, famously stating 'Live on, and by my bounty behold the light of day."

Less than two weeks later, King Richard the Lionheart died at the age of 41, his mother - the long-lived Eleanor of Aquitaine - holding him as he passed. His entrails were then burried at Chalus, his body at the feet of his father's at Fontevraud Abbey in Anjou and his heart in Rouen, Normandy.

Crusade begins
King Richard finally embarks on his crusade, setting sail for the Holy Land. His first port of call is Sicily, arriving at Messina two months later.
4 July 1190

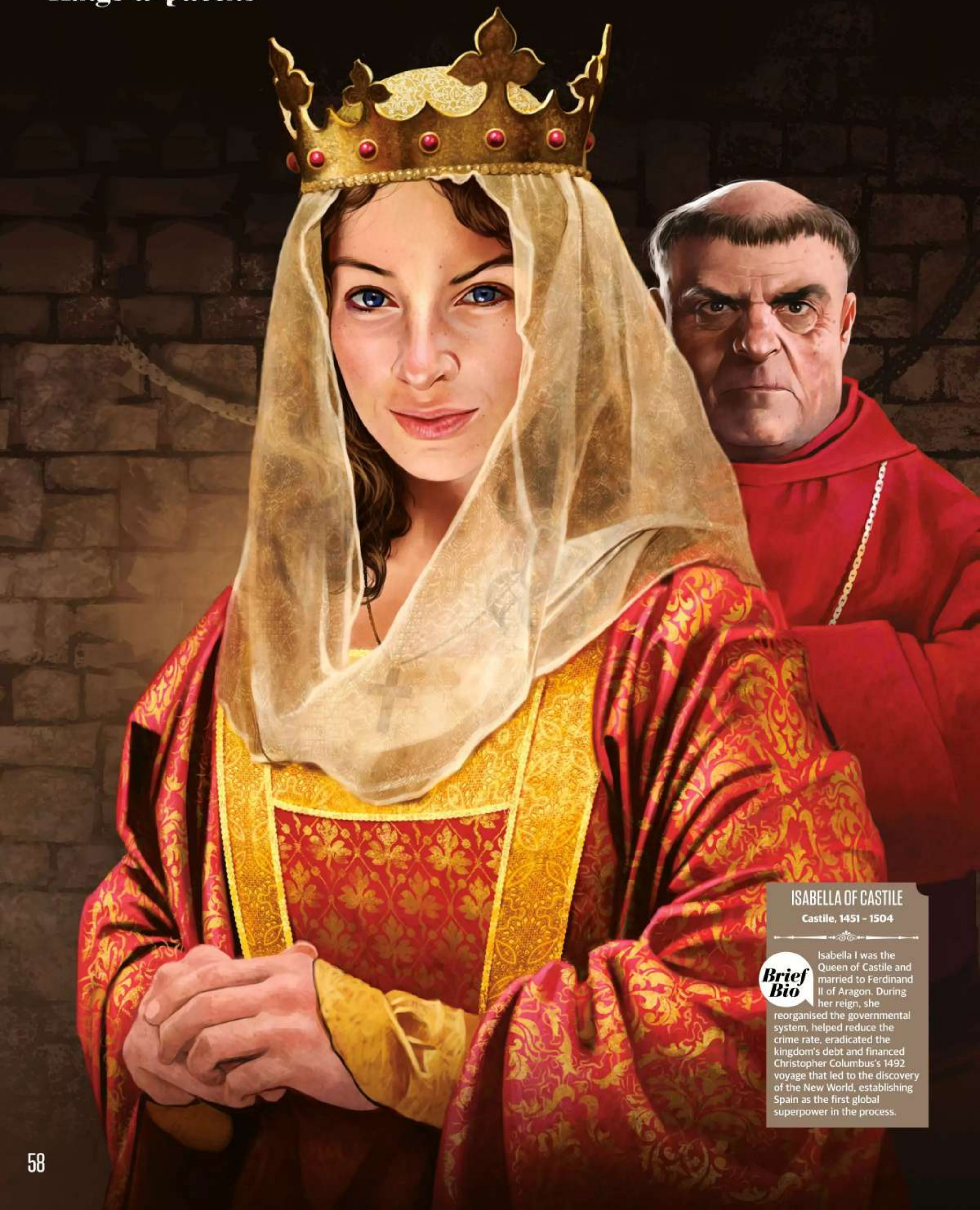
Queen maker
King Richard marries Queen Berengaria of Navarre, the first-born daughter of King Sancho VI of Navarre at Lemesos, Cyprus.
12 May 1191

Richard captured
After travelling back from his crusade, Richard is captured by the Duke of Austria, who he had supposedly offended during the Siege of Acre. He pays a ransom and is freed.
1192

1199

Richard dies
At the age of just 42, Richard the Lionheart dies at Chalus. His body is buried at Fontevraud Abbey in Anjou, while his heart is buried in Rouen in Normandy.
6 April 1199

© Look and Learn; Getty; Alamy



ISABELLA OF CASTILE

Castile, 1451 – 1504

Brief Bio

Isabella I was the Queen of Castile and married to Ferdinand II of Aragon. During her reign, she reorganised the governmental system, helped reduce the crime rate, eradicated the kingdom's debt and financed Christopher Columbus's 1492 voyage that led to the discovery of the New World, establishing Spain as the first global superpower in the process.

1479 – 1504

Isabella of Castile

After succession squabbles marred her path to the throne, Isabella secured her legacy by setting sights on purifying her Catholic Spain

Isabella had been born for this moment. If the 23-year-old princess felt anything other than serenity and conviction, it did not show on her face, her expression betraying nothing as she processed into the church of San Miguel, Segovia, Spain. At last the day had come, and she was to take her place as the queen of Castile and Leon, the largest of the Iberian Peninsula's fragmented kingdoms.

The whole city had come forth to witness her triumph. Only hours before, they had buried the old king and now, his successor, bestride a white horse and adorned with jewels and riches to display her power, came to deliver them from the chaos and disorder that had plagued the people for so long.

Surrounded by her new subjects, Isabella proclaimed her intentions towards the beleaguered kingdom with grace and authority. There would be peace and stability, she promised, and, above all, she would uphold the church that was the cornerstone of her world. Religious unity and peace would reign once again in the Iberian Peninsula. God had decreed it through her, and she would not fail in her duty.

> The Inquisition was not a new idea: the Medieval Inquisition had been used in the 13th century

Isabella, to be known in her own time and in centuries to come as one of the greatest rulers Spain had ever seen, was born to John II of Castile and Isabella of Portugal on 22 April 1451. Or so the sources imply, for, at the time, she was considered so inconsequential that the date of her birth and baptism were not even recorded.

She was born into a Spain that was not yet united: Castile and the rest of the Iberian Peninsula was a hotbed of political, religious and social unrest, and the princess – who stood third in line to the throne after the birth of her younger brother, Alfonso – did not have a secure childhood. When her father died in 1454, her elder stepbrother became king as Henry IV. Living away from court but under the constant eye of her older brother's men, Isabella, her grief-stricken mother and younger brother were kept out of the public eye, ostensibly for their own good but in reality to keep them away from the intrigue that surrounded the court and the thorny issue of the succession.

In greatly reduced living conditions, it was here that Isabella's life-long piety was first carefully cultivated at the hands of her mother and friends, the religious conviction that would see her through many a hardship taking root in fertile soil. It was also during these years of hardship that Isabella's already apparent self control and iron will were carefully honed, standing her in good stead for what was to follow.

Castile under Henry's rule was dangerously unstable; weak, inept and in thrall to his favourites, the king was dethroned in effigy by his nobles in 1465 and Isabella's younger brother declared king.

Civil war broke out, and as the kingdom descended further into terror and brutality, Isabella switched allegiance, proclaiming her support for her younger brother. All expectations were that Alfonso would return Castile to its former glory, but hopes were dashed when the young pretender died suddenly in 1468. Amid the official story of plague, rumours of poisoning abounded, and Isabella, named as Alfonso's successor, became the perfect focus for the hopes of the kingdom.

Over the years that followed, she steered a careful course; instead of succumbing to pressure to lead the revolt, she instead remained outwardly agreeable

Isabella's Ring Collection

An attractive prospect on the marriage market, Isabella was not lacking in potential suitors

1457

Ferdinand of Aragon

Reason: A negotiation between Henry of Castile and John II of Navarre to show their united front.
Outcome: The arrangement was as fickle as the friendship, and was broken off four years later.

1461

Charles of Viana

Reason: The Castilian king turned to Ferdinand's 40-year-old brother to cement an alliance.
Outcome: John II had his son imprisoned, and the betrothal became moot as Charles died that year.

1464

Edward IV of England

Reason: Another alliance attempt; with the added benefit of removing Isabella from Castile.
Outcome: Edward IV had already fallen in love with, and secretly married, Elizabeth Woodville.

1465

Afonso V of Portugal

Reason: Another strategic attempt to remove Isabella from the line of succession.
Outcome: Diplomatic relations broke down, much to the relief of the less than impressed Isabella.

1466

Pedro Giron Pachero

Reason: Master of the Order of Calatrava - he held her brother hostage until the betrothal was agreed.
Outcome: The horrified princess prayed to be delivered; Pedro died on his way to claim her.

1468

Richard of York

Reason: The second most powerful man in England, he was a worthy husband for a princess.
Outcome: An alliance with England was no longer on the cards as relations broke down.

1468

Charles Duke of Berry

Reason: A move towards setting aside the historic bad feeling between Spain and France.
Outcome: The habitual conflict between the two countries soon meant the alliance was set aside.

1469

Afonso V of Portugal

Reason: A final attempt to prevent Isabella from inheriting the throne in Castile.
Outcome: The match was thwarted by Isabella's own actions.

1469

Ferdinand of Aragon

Reason: Isabella never forgot her first betrothal, and entered negotiations on her own behalf.
Outcome: After finally meeting, the smitten Isabella declared she would have no one but Ferdinand.

towards her older brother, negotiating expertly to achieve what she wanted. Honing the control and determination that had been instilled in her during her early years, Isabella bided her time, waiting for the moment she would be called to bring her kingdom back to order.

Isabella attracted several suitors over the years, but the one who held her lasting attention was Ferdinand, the second son of John, king of the neighbouring kingdom of Aragon. Similar in age to her, fit, athletic, handsome and witty, the match had first been mooted when Isabella was only six years old. Now, some 12 years later, she negotiated her own marriage under the very nose of her brother, and in flagrant defiance of the king, married Ferdinand in 1469.

With his kingdom in tatters, Henry died in 1474. Finally Isabella got what she had fought for. She took the throne as queen of Castile and Leon on 11 December 1474. Although heralded by many as the saviour of the kingdom, the early years of her reign were far from smooth, rife with rebellions and plots to overthrow her. Although she had not been trained to rule, and was lacking in Latin and other accomplishments deemed necessary for the task, Isabella did not falter; she had been appointed by God, and by God she would rule. Only she could bring religious unity to the divided kingdom. Her entire life she had been waiting for this moment. She would not fail.

There had been Jews in Spain for more than 1,500 years, and in Isabella's time the population held a ratio of about 80,000 Jews to 6 million Christians. The question of the Jewish faith had long been a delicate issue throughout Europe. Expelled from England in 1290 and France just under a century later, the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon had not followed suit, although there had been forced conversions to Christianity twice in quite recent history. Those who converted became known as 'conversos'.

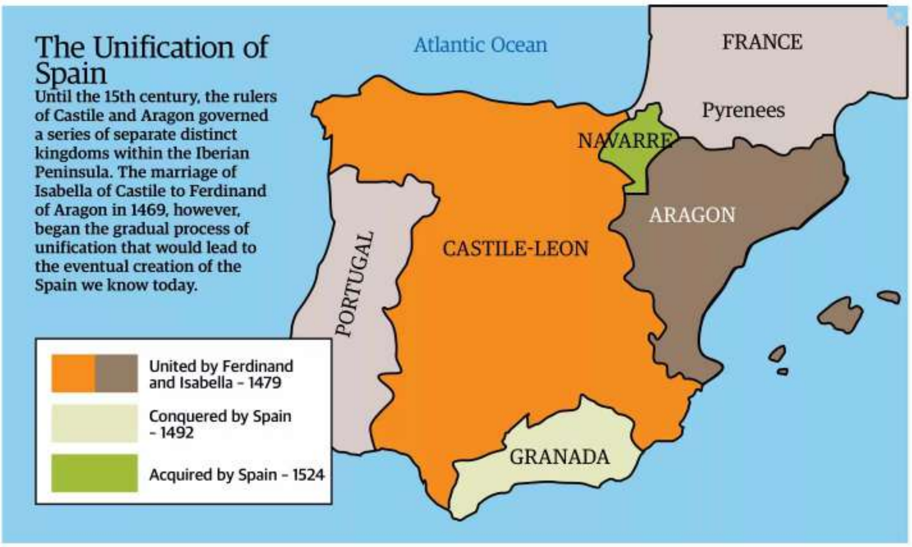
There were those, however, who did not think that the conversos were entirely sincere. They had taken advantage of their new position, it was argued, and indeed many reached positions of power and wealth within the kingdom, further fuelling rumours and jealousies. These false converts, guilty of judaising - practising their old religion while professing the new - were a threat to the security of the realm and the very souls of those who lived there.

Although clever in their deception, there were ways to tell if a convert was still secretly holding to Jewish ways. Food, for one, played a big part in determining if someone's conversion was sincere. Not eating pork, rabbit, and birds that had been strangled was a giveaway, as was frying meat in olive oil instead of lard. Cleansing of meat in general, the cutting off of fat and cooking meat in advance so as not to cook on a Saturday was also used as evidence against supposedly converted 'new' Christians. Avoiding baptising their children and denying that Jesus had been the Messiah were among other ways of identifying a secret Jew.

The matter was further complicated as there were varying degrees of non-adherence. Some conversos were deeply against the tenets of the Catholic Church, maintaining as many elements of their old faith as they could get away with. Others adopted a mixed approach, mingling Jewish practice with Christian in a hybrid religion that differed from family to family.

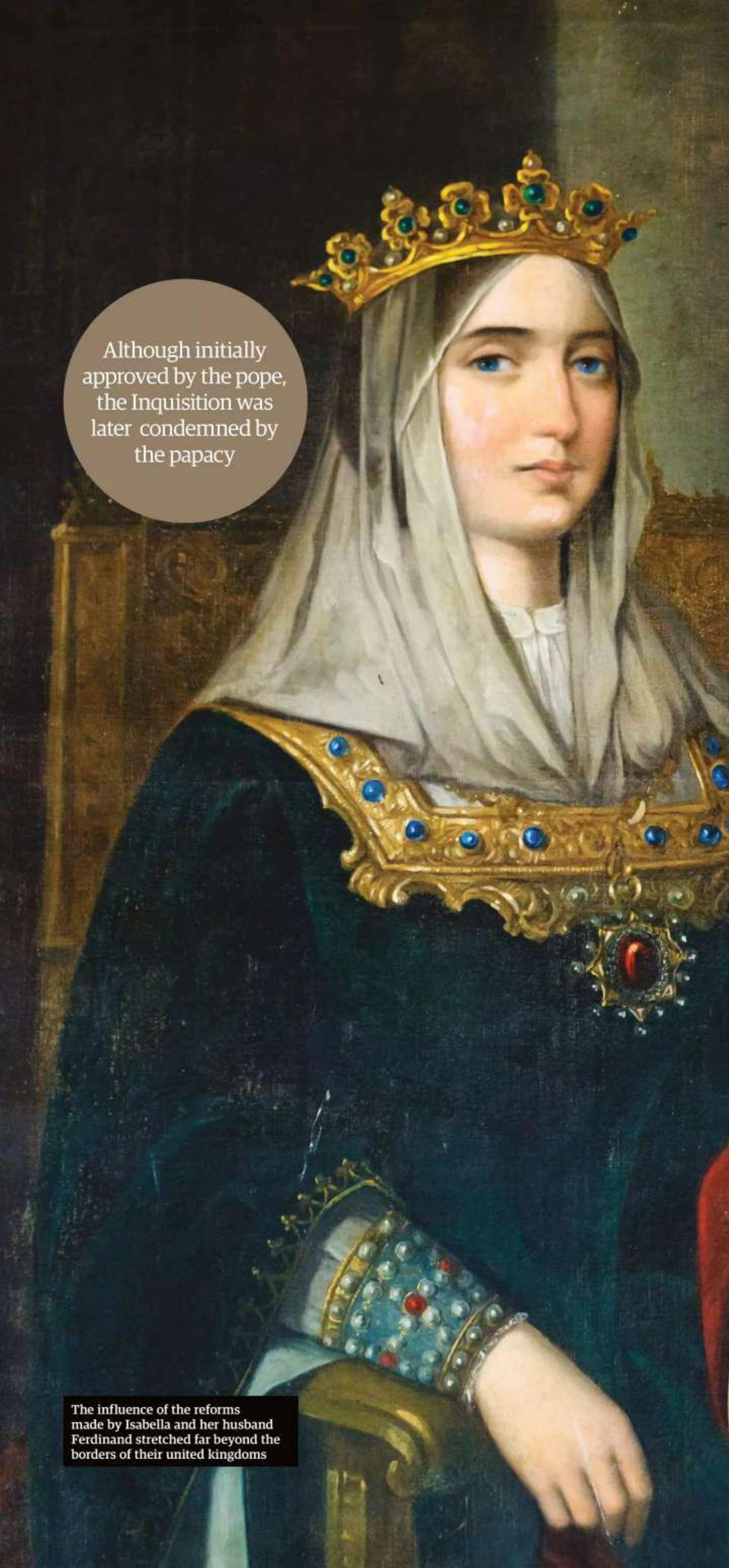
One thing was certain, it would no longer be tolerated. Heresy was not something the new queen could afford to ignore; not only the souls of her people but also her own would be in peril, and must be saved at all costs.

It is often said that a visit to Seville in 1477 first stirred Isabella's interest in adopting an inquisition - or investigation - into the religious state of her kingdom. Receiving first-hand reports of false converts within the city would have alarmed the



The Unification of Spain

Until the 15th century, the rulers of Castile and Aragon governed a series of separate distinct kingdoms within the Iberian Peninsula. The marriage of Isabella of Castile to Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469, however, began the gradual process of unification that would lead to the eventual creation of the Spain we know today.



Although initially approved by the pope, the Inquisition was later condemned by the papacy

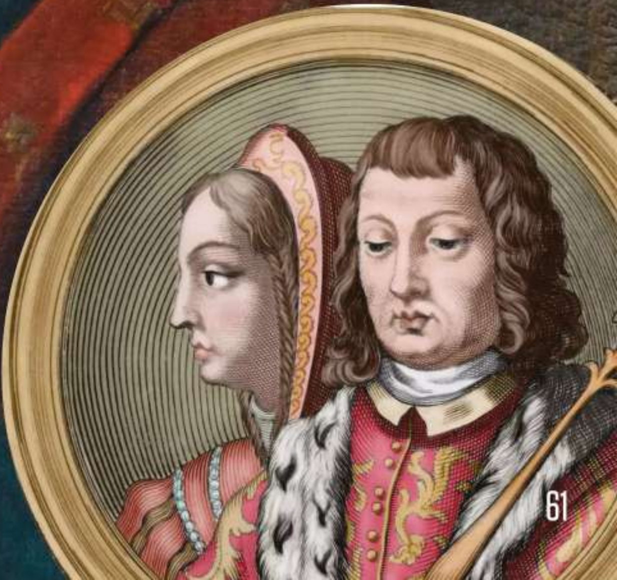
Reforming a kingdom

After inheriting a kingdom in turmoil, Isabella initiated highly effective reform

Law: La Santa Hermandad, or The Holy Brotherhood, was revived, an old system of armed local militias that acted as a citizen police force. Accountable to the queen, they tracked and captured criminals, as well as helping to establish and maintain order. The Hermandad were highly efficient, with a close to 100 per cent success rate. Isabella also personally oversaw the appointment of judges, and the entire judicial system grew more efficient due to regular checks and officials being held to account.

Finance: Currency throughout the kingdom was in a poor state, with coinage debased and inflation driving the population to financial ruin. Isabella reduced the number of royal mints to combat this problem and took control of currency production, restoring the value of Castilian coin. The previous reigns had left the royal coffers devastatingly depleted, especially due to the injudicious selling off of Crown lands. This was halted and reversed under Isabella, with lands either given or sold back to the Crown.

Government: The reform of the royal council was high on Isabella's list of priorities, and she eradicated the dominance of the nobility by restructuring the composition of the council to consist of nine lawyers and only three nobles. She also recognised the importance of personal contact with her subjects, and ensured that there was ample opportunity for people to air their grievances in her presence. The council of state found itself reformed, new councils were established and the entirety of the governmental machine was streamlined to maximise efficiency.



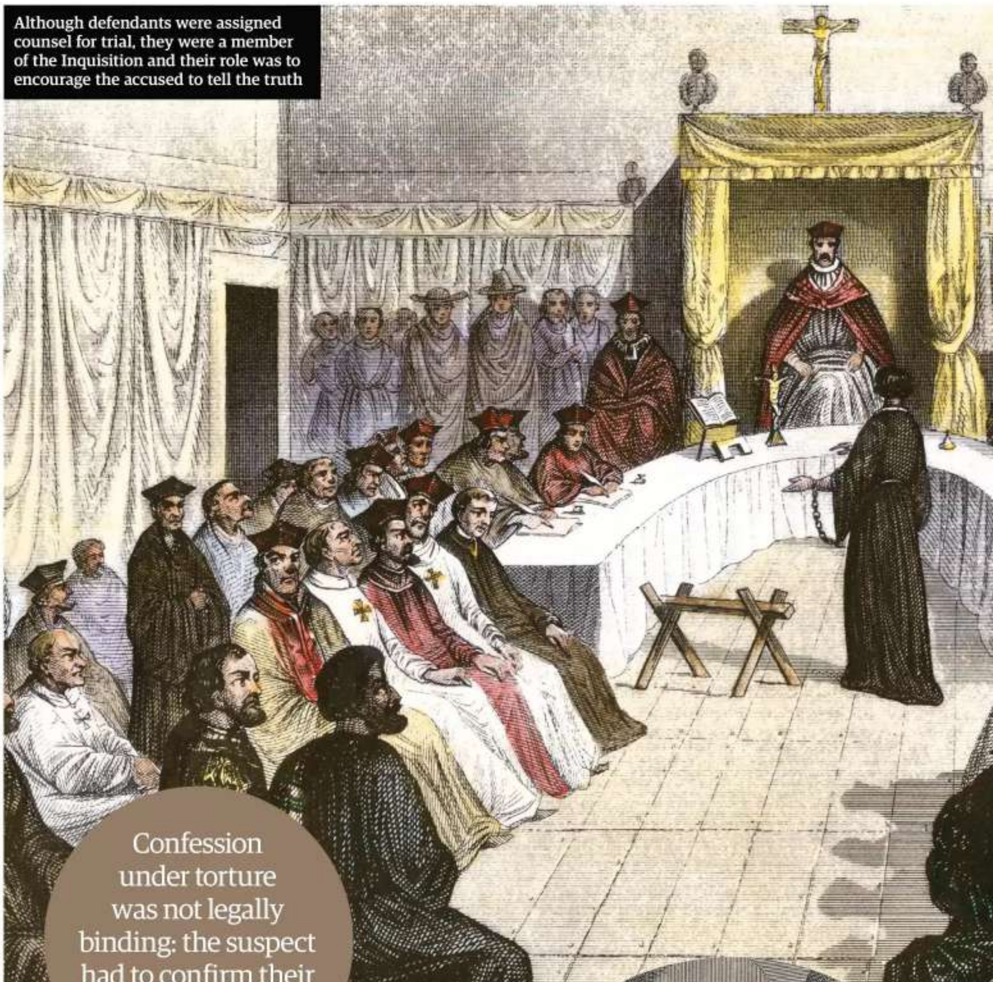
The influence of the reforms made by Isabella and her husband Ferdinand stretched far beyond the borders of their united kingdoms devout queen greatly. The threat they posed to the religious unity and wellbeing of her kingdom would have been a very real concern.

There were those who advocated an aggressive approach from the start, but it seems Isabella was not initially inclined to follow such a course. Despite a Papal Bull granted in 1478 by Pope Sixtus IV giving permission to establish the Inquisition within Castile, Isabella was in no hurry to put it into practice. Ignoring the advocates of a high-handed approach, Isabella instead focused her attention on religious education - or rather the lack of it. Certain that poor training was the reason conversos were failing to follow their new faith, she embarked upon a programme of education to establish the religious conformity essential for the security of her reign.

Two men greatly trusted by Isabella - Cardinal Mendoza and her confessor, the eventual Archbishop of Granada, Hernando de Talavera - were entrusted with this vital task. Arriving in Seville, they set to work, organising priests into enlightening the misguided conversos. They did not make much headway, however, and it soon became clear that they could do little to penetrate the religious ignorance that plagued the town.

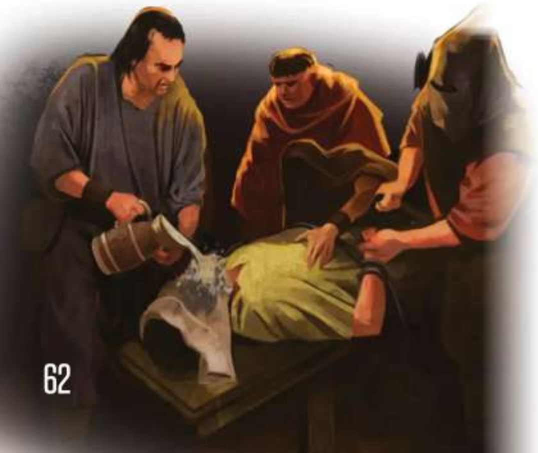
For two years attempts were continued, with little success. Despite her own reservations, there were those close to Isabella who continued to advocate the introduction of an inquisition. Even her husband Ferdinand, ever the pragmatist, was all for it; if nothing else, it would prove a good way of inflating the royal coffers through the confiscation of converso property. With a heavy heart and steely resolve, Isabella had to concede that her attempts to bring religious conformity and peace to her realm had failed. And so, by a royal decree of 27 September 1480, the Spanish Inquisition - or The Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition - was unleashed upon Castile.

Isabella's initial aim was simple: root out the false converts among the converso population and get rid of the heretics jeopardising her beloved kingdom. Although popularised in Spain, it was not an entirely novel idea, and the new inquisition was modelled closely on the older Medieval Inquisition. Under Isabella and Ferdinand, however, the inquisitorial method was given new life, fuelled by Isabella's conviction that religious unity must be achieved whatever the cost.



Although defendants were assigned counsel for trial, they were a member of the Inquisition and their role was to encourage the accused to tell the truth

Confession under torture was not legally binding: the suspect had to confirm their confession after for it to stand



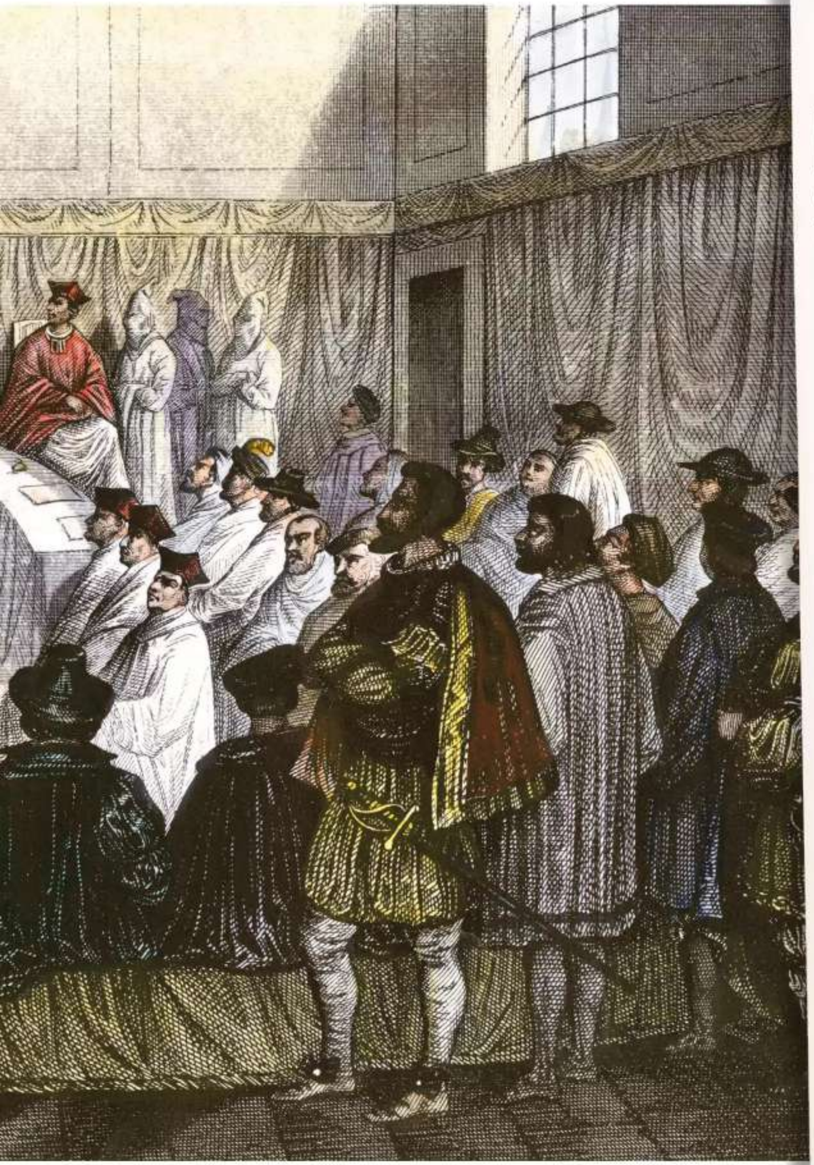
How it worked

What happened in the time between a suspect being accused and convicted, and what outcome could they hope for?

Denouncement
With the offer of grace if confession was made within a certain amount of time, people were encouraged to come forward to confess their sins and to name others in the process.

Detention
The suspect was relieved of their property and imprisoned, their family left in financial ruin. The process was secret, the accused not informed of the nature of the accusations against them.

Trial
The defendant testified, and those who denounced them did likewise. Finding witnesses to absolve them or to prove that their accusers were untrustworthy were a suspect's only means of defence.



THE SPANISH INQUISITION IS HIRING!

Looking for a career change? Want to be part of the most ruthless organisation known to Christian Europe? Look no further for exciting new opportunities

Employment opportunities

Grand Inquisitor

Description: Overseeing the Inquisition and rooting out insincere converts to Catholicism, you will aid and encourage the expansion of the Inquisition throughout Spain and beyond. In this vital role, you will also preside over the Council of the Supreme and General Inquisition.

Skills required: Good leadership, dedication to returning Spain to Christianity, willing to stay in post for several years. Thick skin.

Inquisitor

Description: Answerable to the Grand Inquisitor. Pay: 60,000 maravedies, to rise as the century progresses. A frontline position, you will spend a good deal of time deliberating verdicts and collecting evidence in the quest to eradicate heresy from Spain.

Skills required: No theological training necessary, but must be well versed in the law: university law degree or current position as a tax collector considered a distinct advantage.

Calificador

Description: In this role you will weigh the merits of cases brought before the tribunal. Listening to evidence and deciding if heresy has been committed and arrest warranted will also be within your remit.

Skills required: A theological background is customary for this role, along with good listening and decision-making skills.

Alguacil (Bailiff)

Description: You will be responsible for the arrest and jailing of suspects, along with taking possession of their goods. In this role you will also be expected to implement creative ways of extracting a confession, and be prepared to do whatever it takes.

Skills required: Perseverance and determination are essential to success in this post. A strong stomach and lack of emotion also a bonus.

Fiscal (Prosecutor)

Description: A job right at the heart of the Inquisition: presenting accusations, investigating rumours and getting the truth out of witnesses, there is never a boring moment in this role. Excellent promotion prospects to Inquisitor.

Skills required: Ability to drive the prosecution process. You will also be expected to perform mental and physical torture when required.

Notary of Property

Description: You will be responsible for registering the goods of the accused upon their detention, noting in detail both what they have with them and what other property they have to their name.

Skills required: Good record-keeping skills, the ability to tell if property is of worth, neat handwriting preferable.

Notary of the Secret

Description: Required to record the testimony of accused and witnesses, you will be present during interrogations to make a detailed record of all that occurs. A permanent position, it comes with the rare benefits of access to the Inquisitorial archives and security of tenure.

Skills required: Attention to detail, ability to write fast and clearly, good memory and organisational skills are all essential to succeed in this post.

Familiar

Description: A lay position, the successful candidate will become an honoured servant of the Inquisition. Particularly suited to members of the nobility or those after a title, benefits include being permitted to carry arms in order to protect Inquisitors and, of course, yourself.

Skills required: Must be ready to do your duty at all times. Inclination towards informing not essential but advantageous.

Voluntary confession
This was the safest bet; confessing freely could mean staying alive, and with a reduced punishment than keeping quiet, although by no means guaranteed.

Torture
This was to force a confession and not to cause pain per se, but that was little comfort to the accused, especially as no exception was made for age, sex or infirmity.

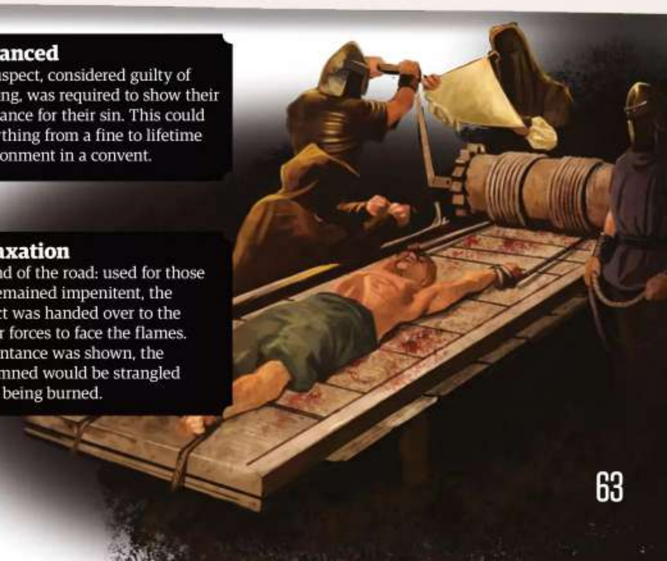
Acquittal
Unusual, but not unheard of, the suspect could be acquitted of the charges made against them, leading to their release.

Suspended
In this instance, the trial was suspended, with the suspect either being released or held in prison until such time that the proceedings recommenced.

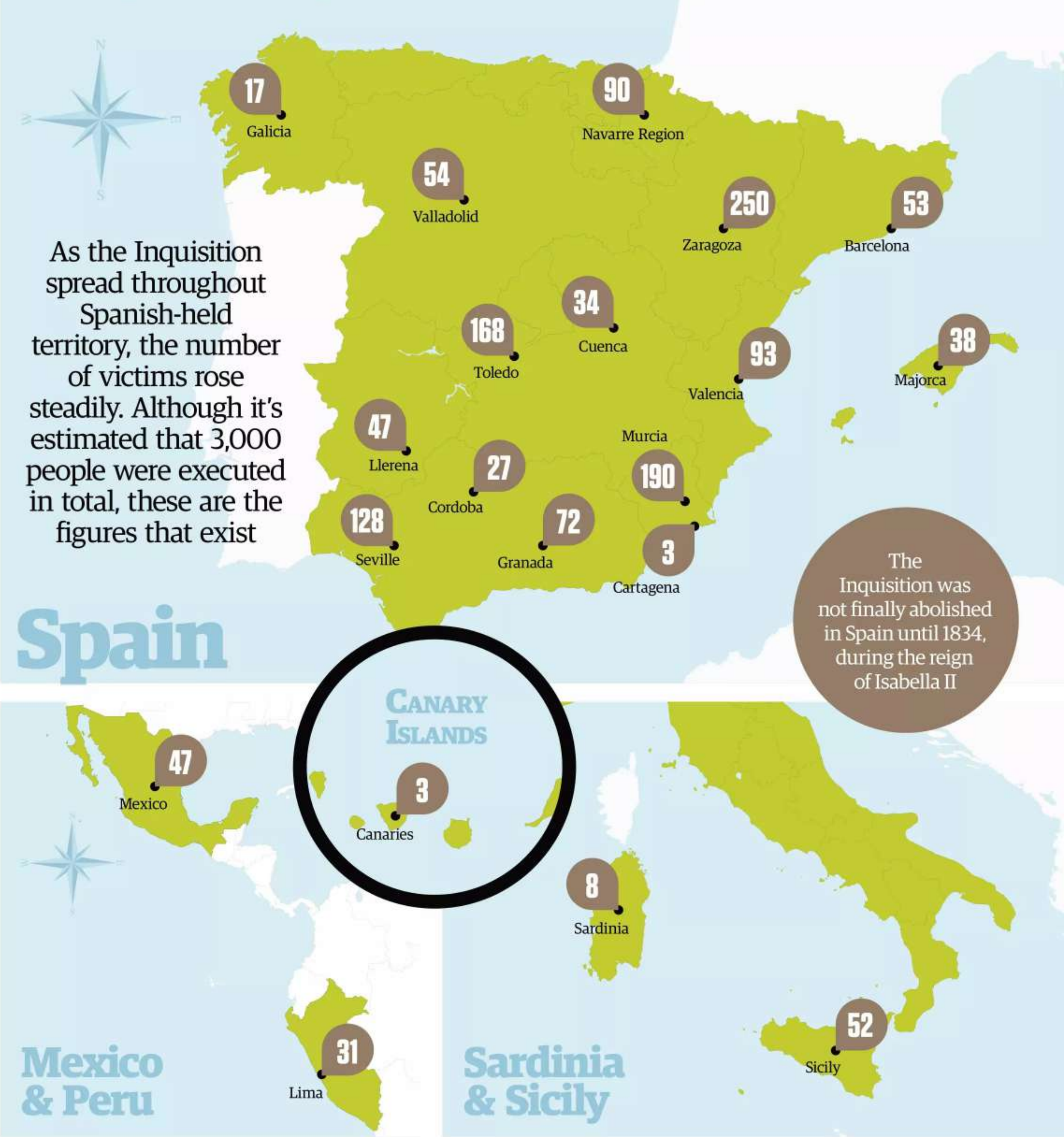
Reconciled
A public ceremony took place where the accused received letters patent to allow them back into the life of the church. Punishment was severe, including confiscation of property and whipping.

Penanced
The suspect, considered guilty of judaising, was required to show their repentance for their sin. This could be anything from a fine to lifetime imprisonment in a convent.

Relaxation
The end of the road: used for those who remained impenitent, the suspect was handed over to the secular forces to face the flames. If repentance was shown, the condemned would be strangled before being burned.

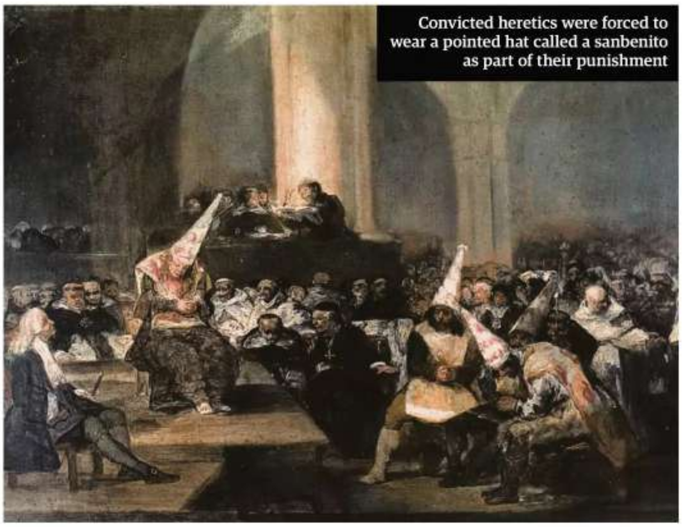


Spanish Inquisition Executions 1540-1700

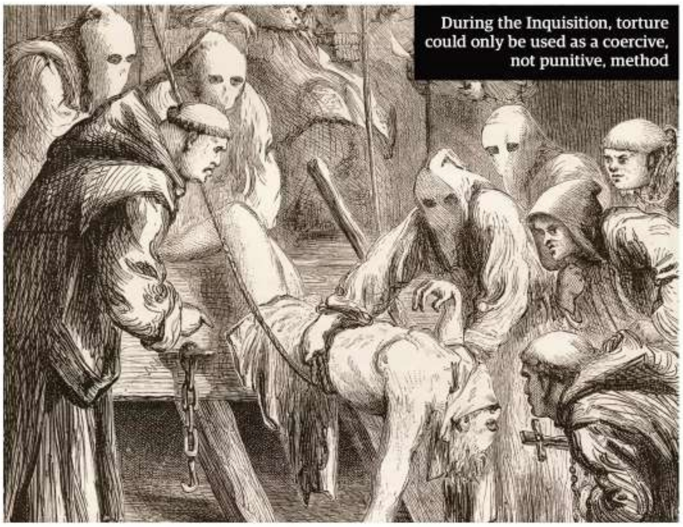

17
Galicia
90
Navarre Region
54
Valladolid
250
Zaragoza
53
Barcelona
34
Cuenca
168
Toledo
93
Valencia
38
Majorca
47
Llerena
Murcia
27
Cordoba
190
128
Seville
72
Granada
3
Cartagena
Spain
Canary Islands
3
Canaries
47
Mexico
8
Sardinia
31
Lima
52
Sicily
Mexico & Peru
Sardinia & Sicily

As the Inquisition spread throughout Spanish-held territory, the number of victims rose steadily. Although it's estimated that 3,000 people were executed in total, these are the figures that exist

The Inquisition was not finally abolished in Spain until 1834, during the reign of Isabella II



Convicted heretics were forced to wear a pointed hat called a sanbenito as part of their punishment



During the Inquisition, torture could only be used as a coercive, not punitive, method

Despite the reputation the Spanish Inquisition would later gain, initially it was not entirely unpopular. On the contrary, at a time when the kingdom had been almost torn apart by the instability of civil war, to some it was a relief to see the proof of firm control being established by the new reign of Isabella. This relief, however, proved premature: the people of the kingdom of Castile would live to regret the day the Inquisition was established within their cities.

The Inquisitors, with their distinctive white robes and black hoods, struck first at that well-known hotbed of converso laxity: Seville. At their arrival, mass panic ensued among the converso community, with about 4,000 people fleeing the city. They were right to be afraid. Retribution was swift. Moves were taken to track down those who had fled, while the nobility, under threat of excommunication, informed against those whose whereabouts were known to them.

The first public execution took place in Seville on 6 February 1481. During the spectacle of the auto de fe, six people were burned, a terrifying declaration of the might of the Inquisition and the intention of the monarchy behind it.

With that, the Inquisition spread steadily through Spain, with tribunals set up in Cordoba, Jaen and the religious capital of Toledo by 1485. A set pattern to proceedings was quickly established. Firstly, the people of a town were prepared; the fear of God - and by extension the Inquisition - preached from the pulpit for all to hear. Matters officially began with the arrival of the Inquisitors, when the Edict of Grace - a call to come forward and confess - would be read out, and a span of time given to the people of the town to respond. If they confessed their sins and admitted their Judaism, they could hope for redemption. If not, they should expect the full wrath of the Inquisition to fall upon them.

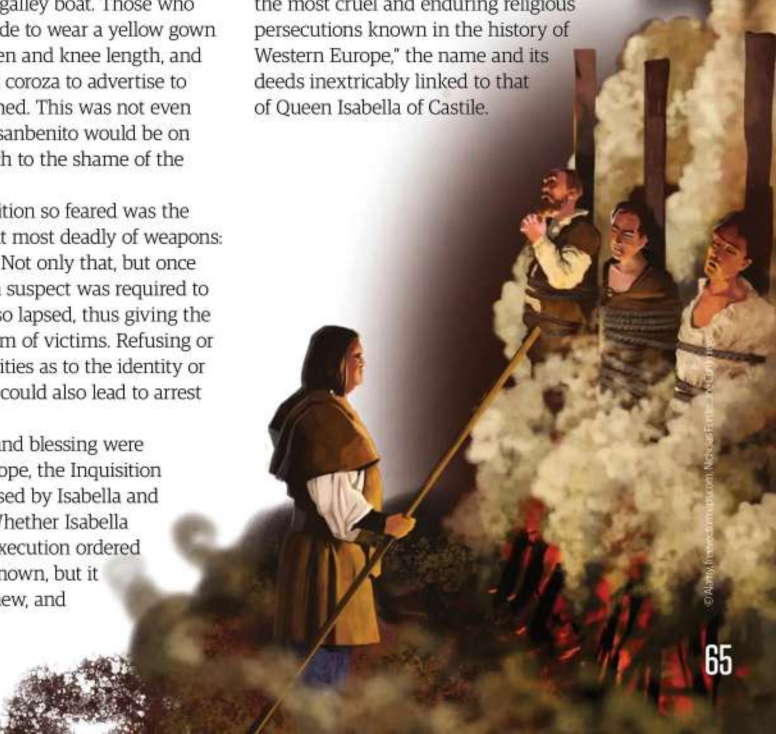
Once a suspect was in custody, the primary aim was to extract a confession. If a person spoke freely, then all to the good. If not, there were ways of gaining the information required. Torture and the Spanish Inquisition have become virtually synonymous in the popular imagination, and for good reason. A standard 15th-century approach, it was used by the Inquisition in order to gain the all-important admission of guilt. Although technically a suspect could only undergo torture once, there were ways around this restriction; talk of a session being paused or suspended meant that it could be continued the following day without strictly breaking the rules.

Once confession had been obtained, the details of the case were then examined, and a verdict and sentence (if necessary) decided. Acquittal, although rare, could sometimes occur. A suspect could likewise be sentenced to perform penance, or the harsher verdict of reconciliation, which could mean indefinite imprisonment, religious incarceration, flogging, or serving on a galley boat. Those who were reconciled were made to wear a yellow gown called a sanbenito, woollen and knee length, and a tall, conical hat called a coroza to advertise to people that they had sinned. This was not even forgotten on death - the sanbenito would be on display in the local church to the shame of the family left behind.

What made the Inquisition so feared was the fact that it thrived on that most deadly of weapons: anonymous accusations. Not only that, but once a confession was made, a suspect was required to name others who had also lapsed, thus giving the Inquisition a steady stream of victims. Refusing or failing to alert the authorities as to the identity or whereabouts of a heretic could also lead to arrest and execution.

Although permission and blessing were initially granted by the pope, the Inquisition was financed and organised by Isabella and Ferdinand themselves. Whether Isabella personally attended an execution ordered by the Inquisition is unknown, but it is undeniable that she knew, and approved of, the methods used by the Inquisitorial machine. Despite this, many of her closest and most trusted advisers had converted from the Jewish faith, with three secretaries who served the monarchs being from converso families. It was even said that Ferdinand himself had Jewish blood in his veins from converso ancestors.

Despite Isabella's hopes, it became apparent that merely targeting conversos was not enough, and in 1492, all Jews were expelled from Spain. In the decades that followed, the Inquisition spread throughout Spanish-held territory, including Naples, the Spanish Netherlands, and territory held by Spain in the Americas. There is no established figure of how many people in total were affected, although it is estimated that 3,000 people went to the flames during Isabella's reign. The Inquisition, to this day, remains "one of the most cruel and enduring religious persecutions known in the history of Western Europe," the name and its deeds inextricably linked to that of Queen Isabella of Castile.



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HENRY VIII

England, 1491 - 1547

Brief Bio

As king, Henry spent lavishly, courted conflict and pursued his own leisurely interests. His most enduring legacy is that, to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, Henry separated England from the Catholic church. However, he is still better known for his six wives.

1509 – 1547

Henry VIII

In pursuing dreams of victory in France, Henry threw England into decades of war and the chaos of a Europe in conflict

Henry VIII was born dreaming of war. When he took the throne in April 1509, with his bride Catherine of Aragon at his side, Henry knew exactly what kind of king he wanted to be. His would be a glorious reign that would restore England to the magnificence it deserved. His father, Henry VII, had become unpopular by levying punishing taxes to restore the country's finances, but the new king had no intention of focusing on matters as petty as the treasury. He would be a conqueror.

By the end of his life, Henry was a bloated and frustrated mockery of the athletic youth that he had once been. He had grown up jousting, riding and hunting, and would often participate in chivalry tournaments in disguise. He had grown up hearing the stories of the great Henry V - the hero of Agincourt - and had dreamed of the battles that years of peace had deprived him of. He was determined that he would repeat his ancestor's triumphs in France and expand England's territory beyond Calais - perhaps even as far as Paris. He wholly believed that France belonged to him and

> "By the end of his life, Henry was a bloated and frustrated mockery of the athletic youth that he had once been"

"Wolsey was the perfect right-hand man, able to counterbalance the king's violent rages with his own skilled diplomacy"

- fortunately for the English monarch - he did not have to wait long to stake his claim.

Henry had grown up in years of stultifying peace thanks to his father's treaties with France and Aragon in Spain. Meanwhile, just across the Channel, the continent was in the throes of war. The powers of Europe clashed over the possession of Naples, essentially turning Italy into one big battleground. A quarrel over the region of Romagna had set Venice against the Vatican, and so Pope Julius II rallied France, the Holy Roman Empire and Spain (under Ferdinand II) in the final weeks of 1508, planning to split the Venetian territories among them.

Venice fell, but Julius feared French occupation of Italy. He mounted an impulsive attack on his allies which backfired as French forces stormed south in retaliation. A terrified Julius formed the Holy League, and Spain and the Holy Roman Empire sided with the papacy in 1511.

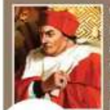
Henry VIII had now been on the throne for two years with his queen Catherine of Aragon (Ferdinand's daughter) at his side. A strong royal family was vital to his dream of a glorious England and he announced that he would marry her shortly after his father died. Catherine was fiercely loyal and determined to meet her king's expectations. She became pregnant almost immediately but their child was stillborn. It was a matter of weeks until Catherine was with child again, and she gave birth to a son, Henry, on New Year's Day, 1511. Sadly, Henry would survive for just seven weeks.

At this point, Henry was a young king just beginning his reign. He was the head of a proud royal family and he had shown his subjects that he was not the penny-pinching tyrant that his father was. The Holy League would enable him to serve his God and show France the power of England's might. The full force of that might would be delivered by Henry's expanding Royal Navy, which would boast the world's largest and most advanced warships. It is important not to underestimate the importance of the pope's blessing. He was still a devout Catholic and would go on to condemn the Protestant Martin Luther so harshly that the pope would give him the title 'Defender of the Faith'. His religion also included the concept of Divine Right; France was his God-given property. The Holy League should have been undefeatable.

However, the first attack ended in disaster. An English force sailed to Gascony in June 1512, due to meet up with Ferdinand's army and claim the region of Aquitaine for Henry. Unfortunately, Ferdinand decided that he was more interested in claiming Navarre for himself and directed his troops in that direction. Ill-equipped and ravaged by dysentery, the English troops were forced to retreat. Henry was furious but resolute.

THOMAS WOLSEY

England, c.1475 - 1530



Brief Bio

Cardinal Wolsey rose to power due to his ability to ensure that Henry got what he wanted. He was deeply ambitious and a skilled political operator. He became archbishop of York, and was made a cardinal and lord chancellor in 1515. He was instrumental in the peace process following Henry's first war in France, and often took public blame for Henry's mistakes. Wolsey's ambitions of becoming pope would be scuppered when Henry's determination to split from Catherine of Aragon destroyed England's relationship with Rome. Scrabbling to reconcile his position in Rome with his duty to his king, Wolsey's failure to deliver papal approval would prove to be his downfall.

Less than a year later, a second invasion plan was underway, with much of the organisation left in the hands of the invaluable Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Wolsey was the perfect right-hand man for a king like Henry, able to counterbalance the king's violent rages with his own skilled diplomacy while sharing a similarly rabid ambition. Wolsey was a fixer; he made sure that whatever Henry wanted, Henry got. What Henry wanted was France, and so, in April 1513, an army was raised and an attack was made on Brest.

This incursion proved even more disastrous than the attempt on Aquitaine, but Henry would not be dissuaded and personally accompanied the English landing at Calais in June. With his feet on French soil and standing at the

Debacle at Gascony

June 1512

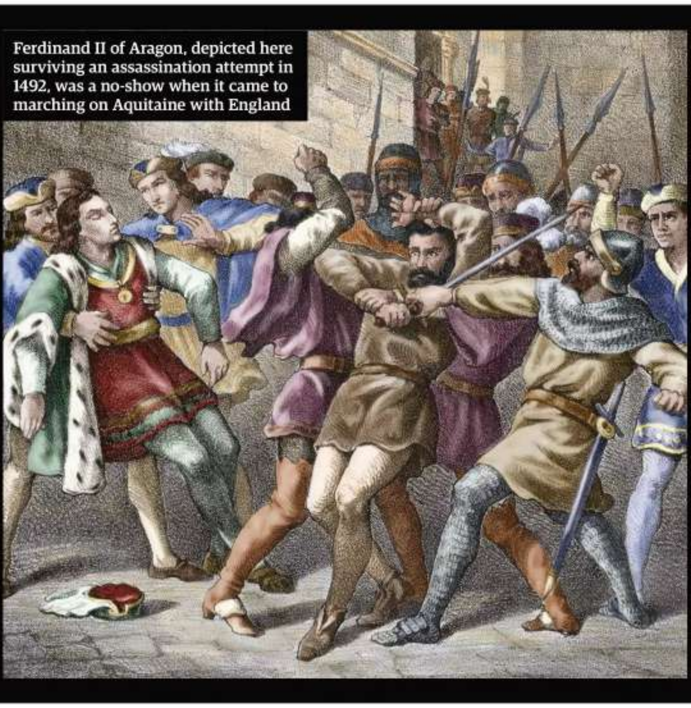
Henry's only concern prior to the expedition to Gascony was that he couldn't be there. It was the first attack on France during his reign and it should have been the first step in a glorious campaign. Henry was all too eager to ally himself with his father-in-law, Ferdinand II, who had similar ambitions to claim French territory. Both kings had joined the Holy League, which had been created in response to France's military activity in Italy. The League had decided that Ferdinand and Henry should attack together and it should have been an impressive display of force.

The Marquis of Dorset was given control of the English forces and the invaders were due to march with Ferdinand on Aquitaine. However, once the Marquis set foot on dry land, he discovered that the Spanish king had not kept his word. Instead, Ferdinand was occupied with his own attack on Navarre, which better served the Spanish king's own interests. The Marquis's troops quarrelled with the few Spanish forces that they had been given and many of his men succumbed to dysentery. As a result of all this, he had no choice but to retreat.

Although Henry can't be blamed for the failure of this attack, it shows the Holy League for what it really was. The kings were fighting with the pope's blessing and the glory of God, but they were all out for themselves. Once the fighting started, each monarch was really only interested in what land they could claim - their allies only functioned as a bank and backup.

Verdict

The forced retreat enraged Henry, pushing him towards leading his own attack, and also sowed the seeds of distrust that would come more prominently to the fore throughout his further campaigns



Ferdinand II of Aragon, depicted here surviving an assassination attempt in 1492, was a no-show when it came to marching on Aquitaine with England

Victory at Flodden Field

9 September 1513

With the king's attention focused on France, the timing was ripe for an attack from the north. King Louis XII reached out to his ally in Scotland and James IV was very agreeable. He wrote to Henry instructing him to abandon his war on the French – an instruction that Henry roundly ignored. The Scottish troops rallied and marched south to the border, sending word that they intended to invade. Having appeased their sense of honour, they waited for the English troops at Flodden.

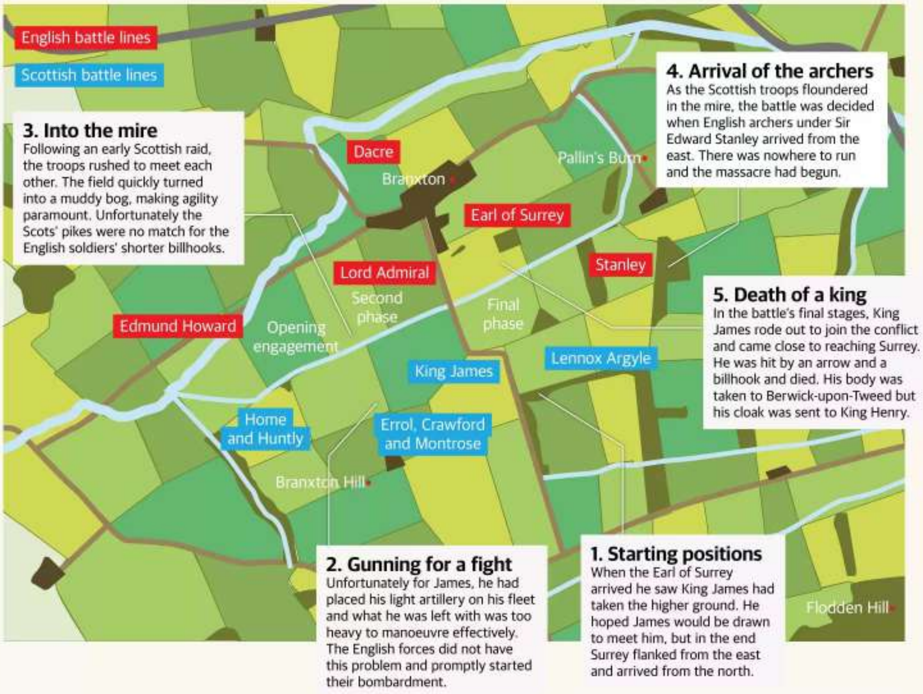
Catherine of Aragon was acting as regent while her husband was at war in France. Catherine was a woman who believed fiercely in duty, honour and loyalty, and the prospect of losing a battle in her husband's absence was too awful to even consider.

Together with the Earl of Surrey, Catherine raised an army from the Midlands to meet the Scottish invaders. Surrey met the Scottish army at Flodden Field and subjected them to a crushing defeat. The number of Scottish dead numbered in the thousands, and King James IV himself was among the fatalities.

While Henry's refusal to leave France may have been the final straw that prompted the attack, he had very little to do with the result of the battle – it was the Earl of Surrey who won the day. The Scottish king fell on the battlefield, and his cloak was sent to France as a trophy for Henry. A decisive victory, but not one which can be attributed to any military excellence on Henry's part.

Verdict

While the victory would assure Henry of England's military might, it was the start of a long and costly struggle with the Scots that would distract him from his goals in France.



1. Starting positions
When the Earl of Surrey arrived he saw King James had taken the higher ground. He hoped James would be drawn to meet him, but in the end Surrey flanked from the east and arrived from the north.

2. Gunning for a fight
Unfortunately for James, he had placed his light artillery on his fleet and what he was left with was too heavy to manoeuvre effectively. The English forces did not have this problem and promptly started their bombardment.

3. Into the mire
Following an early Scottish raid, the troops rushed to meet each other. The field quickly turned into a muddy bog, making agility paramount. Unfortunately the Scots' pikes were no match for the English soldiers' shorter billhooks.

4. Arrival of the archers
As the Scottish troops floundered in the mire, the battle was decided when English archers under Sir Edward Stanley arrived from the east. There was nowhere to run and the massacre had begun.

5. Death of a king
In the battle's final stages, King James rode out to join the conflict and came close to reaching Surrey. He was hit by an arrow and a billhook and died. His body was taken to Berwick-upon-Tweed but his cloak was sent to King Henry.

> "The Scottish king fell on the battlefield, and his cloak was sent to France as a trophy for Henry"

The Scottish army outnumbered the English by about 15,000 at Flodden, but some clever tactics won out

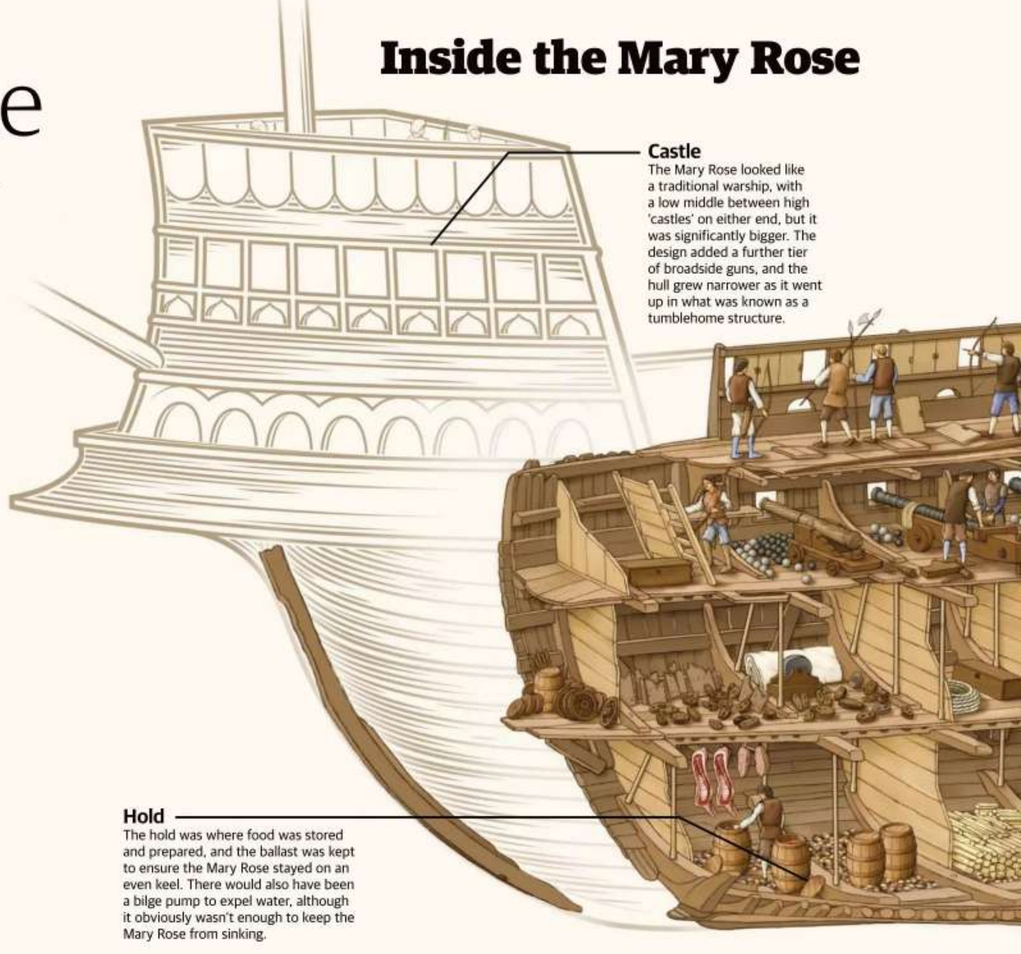
Father of the Royal Navy

Henry might be known as the founder of the Royal Navy but its creation had begun during the reign of Henry VII. Five royal warships had been built by the time Henry VIII took the throne, but the young king wanted more from his military might.

Henry knew that Scotland had invested in their own navy and that he was potentially facing a two-pronged attack by sea. Henry ordered the construction of two great warships: the infamous Mary Rose (which embarrassingly and mysteriously sank while leading the defence against the French at the Solent) and the Peter Pomegranate. Henry's ambition knew no limits and the English Navy would be the biggest, the most advanced and the most fearsome. He equipped his ships with the latest guns and the heaviest cannons, while employing new innovations like hinged gun ports. By the end of Henry's reign, his fleet numbered 58.

Enormous gunships aside, perhaps the most important innovations Henry made to the navy were on land. He created the first naval dock in Portsmouth, he gave the Grant of the Royal Charter to Trinity House (which developed beacons, buoys and lighthouses), and he created the Navy Board and the Office of Admiralty. Henry is known as the father of the Royal Navy because he didn't just bulk up its muscle, he created its backbone.

Inside the Mary Rose



Castle
The Mary Rose looked like a traditional warship, with a low middle between high 'castles' on either end, but it was significantly bigger. The design added a further tier of broadside guns, and the hull grew narrower as it went up in what was known as a tumblehome structure.

Hold
The hold was where food was stored and prepared, and the ballast was kept to ensure the Mary Rose stayed on an even keel. There would also have been a bilge pump to expel water, although it obviously wasn't enough to keep the Mary Rose from sinking.

head of an English army, Henry was exhilarated. He made straight for the town of Thérouanne and promptly laid siege to it. The Holy Roman Emperor and fellow Holy League leader, Maximilian, joined him soon afterwards, helping to assure Henry that he was on the side of the angels. Finally, Henry tasted glory on 16 August 1513 when the French attacked in the Battle of the Spurs. The light French cavalry were unable to withstand the combined forces of the invaders and fled. Henry claimed the day as a great victory, which was consolidated when Thérouanne surrendered on 22 August. The subsequent capture of Tournai was just as important to Henry, and he kept that town as an English stronghold while giving Thérouanne to Maximilian as a gesture of their allegiance.

What had Henry actually achieved? He'd taken two towns from the French, but Paris was a long way away. Nothing he'd done would tip the scales in either direction, but this was just the beginning. Henry was in his element. He was re-enacting the glories of Henry V and who knew how far he could go? Even as Henry celebrated his victories in France, trouble at home soon threatened to bring everything to a halt. All too aware of the English forces currently on their soil, the French reached out to King James IV of Scotland and suggested that this might be the perfect opportunity to mount an attack of their own. James marched south to Flodden Ridge with his armies to await the English.

While England may have seemed weak, Queen Catherine, acting as regent, had no intention of allowing such a challenge to go unanswered. An army was raised and met the Scots on 9 September. The English victory was brutally decisive and King James was killed. The gleeful queen sent the fallen monarch's bloody cloak to her husband in France, with the message: "In this your Grace shall see how I keep my promise, sending you for your banners a king's coat." Henry was conquering his enemies abroad, while his queen was seeing off attackers at home.

Sadly for the warrior king, peace was just around the corner, whether Henry wanted it or not. He had been acting as a war chest to his allies and England's coffers were so depleted that there was simply no way that he could carry on alone. He would have to make peace. The next few years presented Henry with a new potential ally, and a new enemy.

The ambitious Francis I took the French crown, while the Austrian King Charles V was elected Holy Roman Emperor (adding Spain and a huge portion of Italy to his kingdom). Wolsey, aware of the financial sinkhole that the wars had been, worked hard to keep the peace. He managed to put quills to paper with the Treaty of London in 1518, while friendship would be forged at the Field of the Cloth of Gold on 7 June 1520. The plan was that Henry and Francis would spend a week enjoying the festivities and settling their differences, while Wolsey met with Charles V. It did not go according to plan.

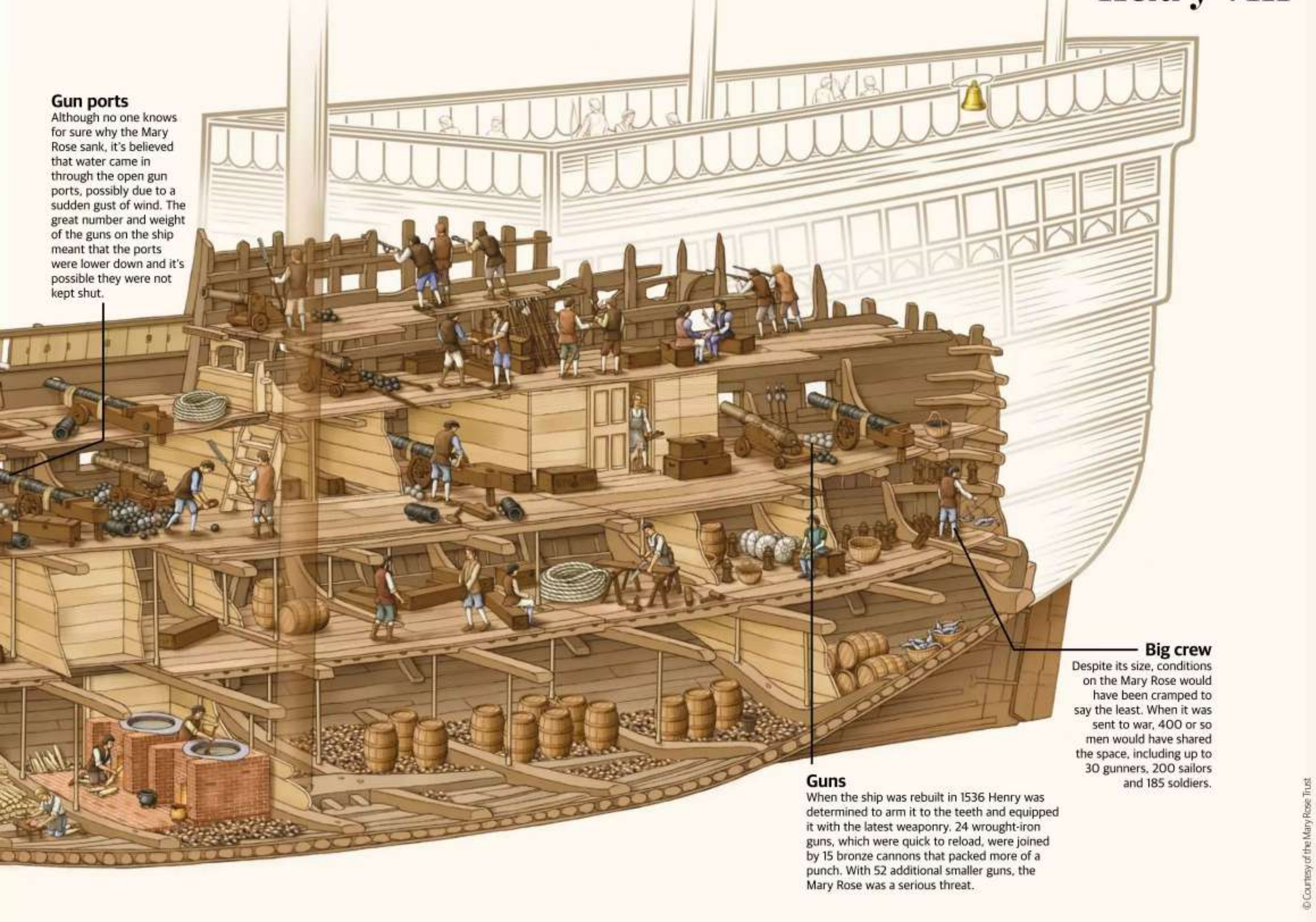
For all Wolsey's good intentions, this attempt at friendship was doomed from the start. Henry had never wanted peace to start with,

THOMAS MORE

England, 1478 - 1535

Brief Bio

Thomas More trained as a lawyer and nearly became a monk before entering Henry's employ in 1517, taking on a variety of roles from interpreter to writer and chief diplomat. The two quickly became close confidants and More was knighted four years later, before becoming the speaker of the House of Commons in 1523. It was his strong Catholic faith that would prove his downfall. Although he was made lord chancellor in 1529, he rejected the formation of the Church of England with Henry at its head, so resigned soon after. His refusal to accept the new denomination would lead to his arrest and eventual execution on 6 July 1535.



Gun ports
Although no one knows for sure why the Mary Rose sank, it's believed that water came in through the open gun ports, possibly due to a sudden gust of wind. The great number and weight of the guns on the ship meant that the ports were lower down and it's possible they were not kept shut.

Big crew
Despite its size, conditions on the Mary Rose would have been cramped to say the least. When it was sent to war, 400 or so men would have shared the space, including up to 30 gunners, 200 sailors and 185 soldiers.

Guns
When the ship was rebuilt in 1536 Henry was determined to arm it to the teeth and equipped it with the latest weaponry. 24 wrought-iron guns, which were quick to reload, were joined by 15 bronze cannons that packed more of a punch. With 52 additional smaller guns, the Mary Rose was a serious threat.

© Courtesy of the Mary Rose Trust

and Francis had no intention of bowing down to his English counterpart. Ambitious, stubborn and proud, the two men were too similar for any attempts at friendship to work. After the first meeting was concluded, the two kings engaged in a week of oneupmanship and competition. It was a week dedicated to flaunting power and status; the 'cloth of gold' referred to the ludicrously lavish tents. Henry was determined to prove his athleticism and joined the competitions, but Francis had a similar idea. Henry had to suffer the humiliation of losing to the French king in a wrestling match, and it is hardly surprising that the only result of the meeting was a greater sense of hatred. Instead, Henry turned his diplomatic attentions to Charles V.

Henry's alliance with the Habsburgs had continued throughout the years of peace, despite one or two hiccups involving marriage arrangements. Crucially, Charles and Henry shared a mutual loathing of Martin Luther and King Francis. His hatred of the French king meant that war was inevitable and Henry eagerly awaited the perfect opportunity to mount another attack. When hostilities resumed in 1521, Henry declared that England was now allied with the Holy Roman Emperor and signed the Treaty of Windsor in 1522 to make 'The Great Enterprise' official. At this point in his plans, Henry could not afford a full-scale invasion and an attack on Picardy failed due to a lack of communication and, perhaps more importantly, trust.

> "Henry's ambition to conquer France was hamstrung by the fact that he couldn't afford it"

Henry's ambition to conquer France and claim the throne for himself was hamstrung by the fact that he couldn't afford it. He had previously helped to bankroll Ferdinand and Maximilian and he had seen them make peace without him. Henry was scared that Charles might repeat his father's trick and, for his part, Charles had no particular interest in seeing Henry on the French throne. Their mutual distrust would only grow.

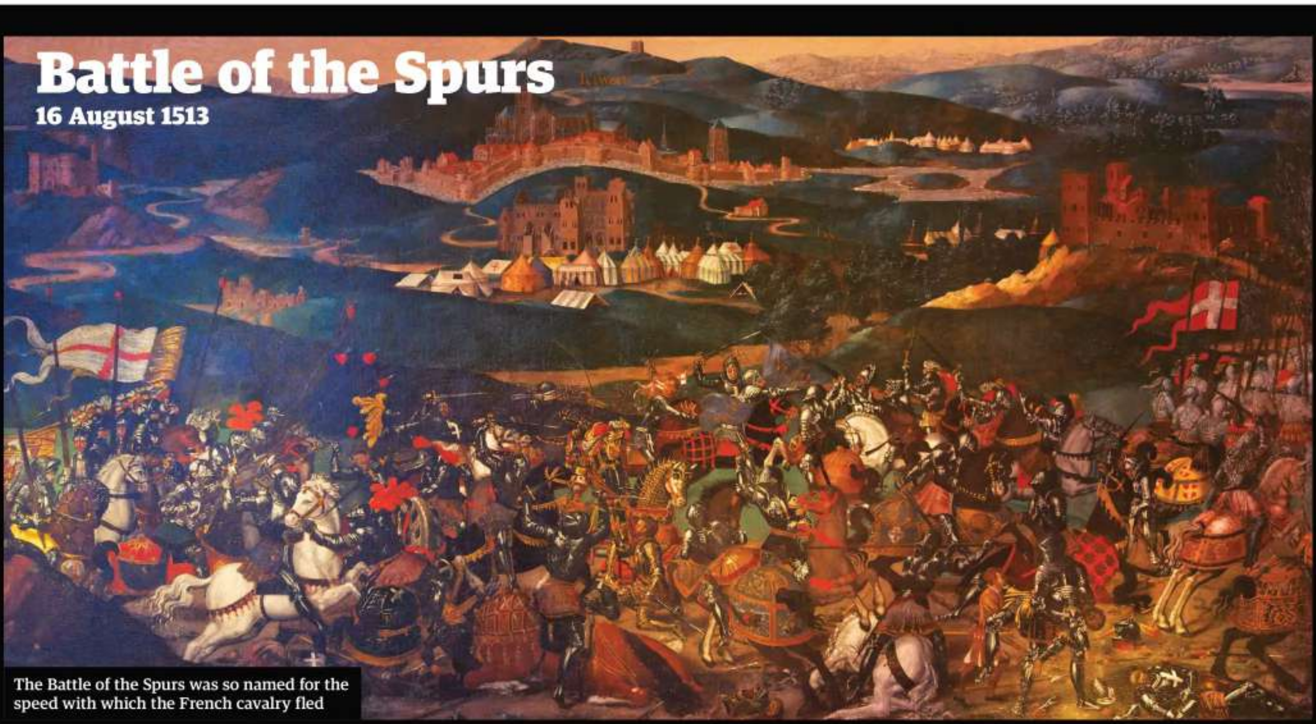
Trust wasn't the only problem. In an echo of 1513, Henry was distracted by the constant threat from the north. Whenever he began a campaign in France, the Scottish forces would threaten attack, forcing him to wage a war on two fronts. Henry was enraged and infuriated but he would not give up. He mounted another attack in 1523 to support the rebelling Duke of Bourbon, but Charles sent no help and the English troops were forced to retreat.

The line was finally crossed when Charles captured Francis at the Battle of Pavia in 1525 and showed no interest in sharing his spoils with the English king. Henry decided that the time had come for a full-scale invasion. With nowhere near enough money, Henry and Cardinal Wolsey tried to create the 'Amicable Grant' tax to pay for the attack, but opposition proved so fierce that Henry was forced to scrap his plans and publicly blame Wolsey. The humiliation of backpedalling helped Henry to realise that he was not going to get what he wanted. He signed the Treaty of the More with Francis's mother, Louise of Savoy, and turned his attention towards his family.

Not surprisingly, Charles's rejection rankled Henry. The Holy Roman Emperor's increased presence in Italy once again caused the panicking Pope Clement VII to create the League of Cognac,

Battle of the Spurs

16 August 1513



The Battle of the Spurs was so named for the speed with which the French cavalry fled

Henry and his English forces had been laying siege to the town of Thérouanne since July 1513. Following the embarrassment at Gascony, he had finally arrived in France to lead his army to great conquest. He camped close, but not too close to the city, and laid siege. A stalemate ensued until French action on 16 August tipped the scales.

The French forces had seen Maximilian's Holy Roman Army join Henry's and decided that the time had come to attempt a counterattack. On the morning of 16 August, French light cavalry, a few thousand strong, attacked the invaders' positions. However, word had reached the Holy League's camp of the planned attack and a trap had been prepared, leading to a brutal skirmish. It was an attack that was ultimately doomed to fail, with Henry and Maximilian's combined forces coming to roughly 30,000 men. The speed with which the surviving French rode away led to the name of the battle.

It was not a significant military victory in any other term than morale. Henry had been looking for a victory to claim in France, and this encounter was the first real battle of his campaign. He celebrated it but the actual gains from the Battle of the Spurs and the subsequent fall of Thérouanne would impress nothing but his ego. At great financial expense, Henry's dreams of Agincourt came a little closer.

Verdict

The victory at the Battle of the Spurs did more for Henry's ego than it did for the outcome of his campaign, essentially proving to be an incredibly expensive display.

> "Overjoyed at having the queen he lusted after, Henry realised that a Europe united against him was dangerous"

which united Venice, Florence and France against Charles. Henry was not a member, but offered to help bankroll the group. His treaty with Francis in the Treaty of Westminster on 30 April 1527 was a sign that his mind was elsewhere.

Henry was desperate to be separated from Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn. He had no interest in a divorce and instead wanted to prove that it had been illegal to marry his brother's widow. This would soothe the good Catholic in him, but it set him against Charles V, who was appalled by what the accusation said about his aunt, Catherine. However, circumstances were not in Henry's favour; Charles had attacked Rome in retaliation for the League's advances. Pope Clement VII was now his prisoner and Catherine's nephew made his influence felt. Clement gained his freedom in December, but the emperor had no interest in peace talks with the League. Once again, Charles had frustrated Henry's plans and he declared war with the Holy Roman Emperor in January. However, England lacked the finances to do any more than declare itself at war; it's unlikely that this worried Charles too much. The situation in Europe finally resolved itself in 1529 with the Treaty of Cambrai. However, Henry's determination to end his marriage had made enemies out of his old allies. Francis offered to plead his case to the new Pope Clement, but he was more concerned with cementing his own alliance with the Holy See. Anne Boleyn's pregnancy pushed Henry into taking decisive action and his marriage to Catherine was annulled by Thomas Cranmer in 1533. In the eyes of the English court, his secret marriage to Anne was now completely legal. Finally, Henry was recognised as Head of the Church and abolished the right of Appeal to Rome. England was no longer Catholic and the pope had no more influence over the king.

Although he was overjoyed at finally having the queen he lusted after, Henry realised that a Europe united against him was a dangerous prospect indeed. He tried to take advantage of the frequent arguments between Charles and Francis, but in 1538 the excommunication order for Henry was finally delivered and the pope declared that the Vatican would support anyone who deposed the English king; his death was something God would turn a blind eye to. Luckily for Henry, Charles was busy with the Ottoman Empire and, if Francis planned to attack England, he had no intention of doing so alone. Henry knew that the differences between Francis and Charles would prevent them from ever remaining allies for long. He just had to be patient. Finally, in 1542, they declared war and Henry could return to the battlefield.

By this point Henry was obese, sickly and prone to violent rages. The war gave him a sense of

The Siege of Boulogne

19 July - 18 September 1544

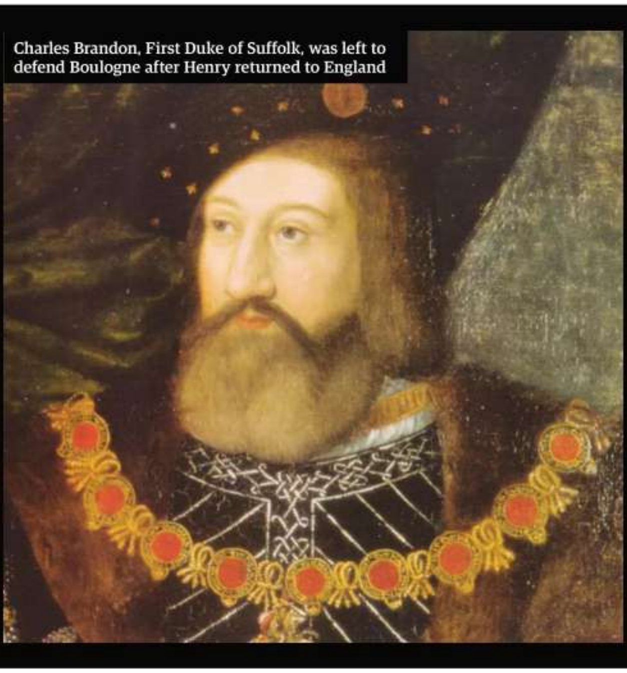
The Siege of Boulogne would be the closest thing to an unqualified victory that Henry would get in all his years of war with France. However, the conquest of a single city at tremendous expense tells us that unqualified is not really the most accurate adjective to use. Henry had been waiting for an excuse to resume hostilities with France and he eagerly joined his old ally (and old enemy) Charles V when war broke out in 1544. He raised a huge invasion force to set sail across the Channel.

The English force was split into two;=, attacking Montreuil and Boulogne, with Henry himself joining the latter. While the attack on Montreuil failed, the Siege of Boulogne, though lengthy, would result in success. The siege began on 19 July and the English forces quickly took the lower part of the city. However, they were unable to breach the castle walls and the siege stretched from weeks into months. Henry wrote to his wife (number six, Catherine Parr) praising the strength of his opponents, but it was only a matter of time before the French were forced to surrender, which they did after Henry's forces tunnelled beneath the walls.

However, Henry's triumph would be short-lived. He learned that Charles, fearful of the Ottoman threat and caring little about Henry's personal ambition, had made his own peace treaty with France without England. Henry returned home to attend to Scotland, leaving Boulogne occupied, and Francis began preparations for a counterattack.

Verdict

Henry may have taken the city, but the financial cost was enormous. Although Charles's treaty led to threats of a French invasion, Francis's attempts ultimately failed.


Charles Brandon, First Duke of Suffolk, was left to defend Boulogne after Henry returned to England

purpose and Charles was finally back on his side. For all their past differences, now there were no personal reasons why Henry and Charles could not resume their alliance. Catherine of Aragon had passed away and, by executing Anne Boleyn, Henry had removed the insult to Charles' honour. Across the Channel, Francis wasn't sitting idly by and he knew how to keep Henry distracted.

Scotland had proved to be a continual thorn in Henry's paw during his attempts to invade France, attacking every time his attention was focused across the Channel. Having hoped that James V would be a more amenable ally than his predecessor, Henry was livid when Scotland refused to follow him in separating from Rome. When James did not appear at the diplomatic talks at York in 1541, outright conflict followed. Following a minor Scottish victory at the Battle of Haddon Rig in 1542, the two armies met at Solway Moss. In a brutal echo of Flodden Field, the Scottish army suffered a humiliating defeat. James V died of fever about two weeks later and Henry, once again buoyed by such a decisive victory, turned his attention to France.

Henry was taking no half measures and invaded France on two fronts. Stretching his finances as far as they would go, he sent troops to Montreuil under the Duke of Norfolk, while another force attacked Boulogne under the Duke of Suffolk. While Norfolk failed, Suffolk succeeded. Henry himself arrived to take charge of the siege which lasted from July until September when the city fell. He basked in the glory of a French city claimed, but his elation was short-lived. Henry was forced to turn his attention back to Scotland, where a rebellion had sprung up. His retaliation was so brutal that it became known as the 'Rough Wooing'.

The Rough Wooing

December 1543 - March 1550

The Rough Wooing was the result of Henry's failed attempt to subdue Scotland while he turned his attention to France. Although he might have won a huge victory at the Battle of Solway Moss, Henry's hopes that the Scottish would be amenable to peace proved to be ill-founded. He had given them his terms, but Henry may as well have given them a blank piece of paper, as Scotland declared its renewed allegiance to France.

At the time, Henry was planning his invasion with Charles V and could not afford to be distracted by yet another full-blown conflict with his neighbours in the north. Deciding against open battle, Henry commanded that a force should sail north and show the Scots how furious he was. It was led by Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, who was told to "Burn Edinburgh town, so razed and defaced when you have sacked and gotten what you can of it, as there may remain forever a perpetual memory of the vengeance of God."

Towns and villages were to be burned down and destroyed, and the king's strict instructions as to what to do with anyone who opposed Hertford were clear; he was commanded to continue "putting man, woman and child to fire and sword, without exception, where any resistance shall be made against you." Hertford obeyed his liege's orders with relish, sending frequent reports of his conquests back to his king, and capturing Edinburgh and the nearby port at Leith. However, France did not sit idly by, but instead sent forces to help Scottish counterattacks. This dual campaign of aggression between England and Scotland would only be (temporarily) halted by the Treaty of Camp in 1546.

Verdict

Although it had the immediate effect that Henry wanted, which was to give a show of force and wrath, the Rough Wooing only served to deeper entrench hatred and distrust of the English.

The invasion of France fell apart when Charles signed another continental peace treaty that excluded England. Francis had no intention of making peace with Henry and mounted an invasion in the summer of 1545. It was a very real threat but, fortunately for Henry, the attack was a dismal failure and Francis was forced to retreat. The Treaty of Camp brought an end to the years of war in Henry's reign, as England, France, Scotland and the Holy Roman Empire agreed to peace in 1546.

He died a year later, sickly, angry and defeated. So what does Henry VIII's history as a military commander show us? It shows him to be a man unable or unwilling to grow out of the romantic, heroic dreams of his youth. He was constantly fighting for the glory that he saw for himself and for England. In his mind, France was English property that no one before him had been able to claim. He saw himself as the king who would bring it under English rule, and it was a childhood dream that became an adult delusion. By joining with allies who had no interest in his dream, and reacting rashly to insults, real and imagined, Henry spent many years at war with little to show for it.

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1516 – 1556

King Charles I of Spain

The heir of three of Europe's leading dynasties and future Holy Roman Emperor, Charles I of Spain was arguably the most powerful man in the world, with a reign typified by military success and territorial expansion

The closest thing to an Emperor of Europe that ever existed during the 16th century, Charles I of Spain – who was also more importantly Holy Roman Emperor (see 'Charles I or Charles V?' boxout for more information) – was not only heir to three of Europe's leading dynasties but also ruler of extensive territories that stretched throughout Europe and the Americas. Indeed, as well as controlling the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, parts of Italy and France, Charles also benefitted much territorially by the conquests of the Spanish conquistadores, with men like Hernan Cortes granting him control of large parts of modern day South America.

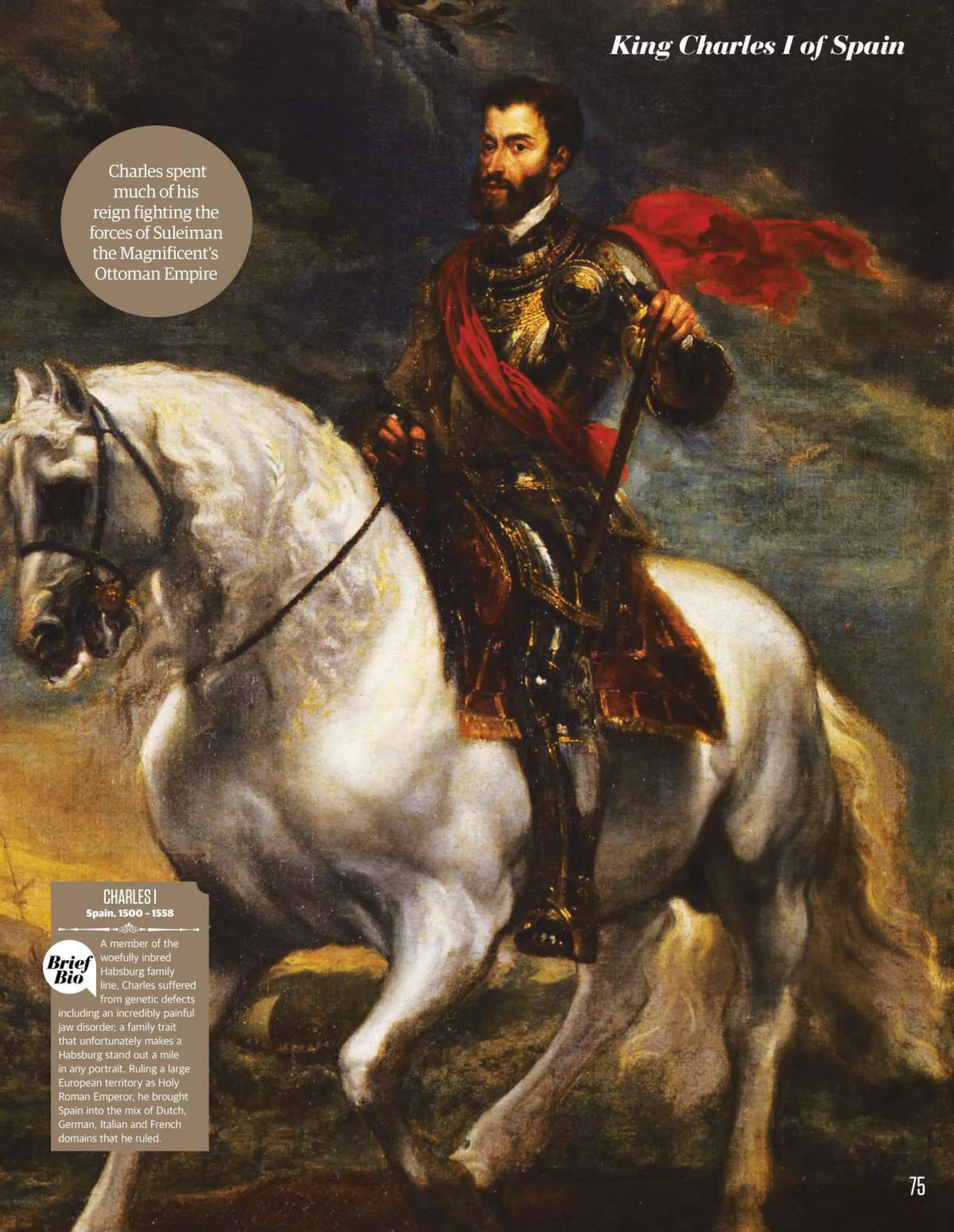
Charles, especially in his later life, became famous for his deformed lower jaw, the product of centuries of royal inbreeding

Charles was, however, born as the eldest son of Philip I of Castile in the Flemish city of Ghent in 1500, where he both received his education and cultural mindset. At the age of six Charles inherited his father's Burgundian Low Countries' territories and by the time he was 15, he could famously speak multiple languages including German, French and Flemish. At 15 the first test for Charles as a ruler occurred, with a rebellion of Frisian peasants scoring a series of military victories over Charles' forces. Charles didn't panic, however, and after consulting with his advisers, managed to push the rebels back and, eventually, capture their leaders and decapitate them. It was Charles' first taste of war.

During his reign Charles oversaw much of Spain's colonisation of the Americas

While Charles was being blooded in the Netherlands, his mother Joanna Queen of Castile was ensuring his succession in Spain. This came to a head in 1516 when Charles' grandfather King Ferdinand II of Aragon died, with Joanna then also inheriting the Crown of Aragon, a rule that included the lands of Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, Naples, Sicily and Sardinia. Joanna used this opportunity to finalise Charles' succession, with it being arranged that he was named King of Castile and Aragon, and that he would rule jointly with his mother till her death. One year later Charles arrived in Spain to survey and control his new territories.

Due to Queen Joanna still being alive and the perception of Charles as



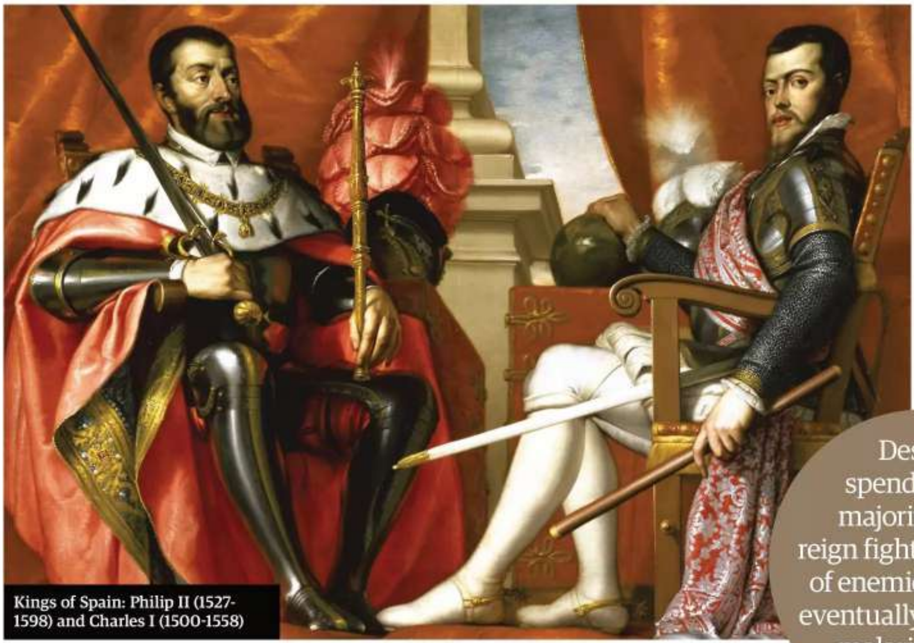
Charles spent much of his reign fighting the forces of Suleiman the Magnificent's Ottoman Empire

CHARLES I

Spain, 1500 - 1558

Brief Bio

A member of the woefully inbred Habsburg family line, Charles suffered from genetic defects including an incredibly painful jaw disorder; a family trait that unfortunately makes a Habsburg stand out a mile in any portrait. Ruling a large European territory as Holy Roman Emperor, he brought Spain into the mix of Dutch, German, Italian and French domains that he ruled.



Kings of Spain: Philip II (1527-1598) and Charles I (1500-1558)

a foreigner, his arrival was not met with widespread acclaim by the local population and the Spanish officials treated him with great suspicion. Indeed, Charles was only finally confirmed as monarch after signing an agreement that mandated that he learn to speak Castilian, not to promote foreigners to court, respect the rights of his mother and not to take Spain's precious metals out of the region. Charles agreed to this and was begrudgingly accepted as ruler and for the following two years everything was going to plan, with Charles laying down his own style of rule and policies.

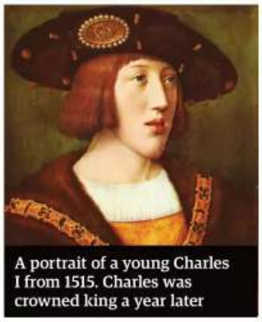
However, in 1520, due to Charles placing a high taxation rate on all his Spanish territories, a revolt sprung up. Challenged for the first time in Spain, Charles brought the full military might of his forces down upon the rebellion and, after learning how to deal with such uprisings in the Netherlands, brutally put it down quickly. With his Spanish territories now pacified, the young and powerful king then looked to expand his already impressive lands. He had much success too, capturing Milan in 1522 off a Franco-Swiss army at Bicocca and then Lombardy in 1525. In 1527 Charles even managed to sack the grand city of Rome, virtually imprisoning the pope - his power was seemingly uncheckable.

However, Charles was soon to be tested like never before in battle, with the mighty forces of the Ottoman Empire's Suleiman the Magnificent invading Europe and making a beeline for Charles' central territories. A wave of terror spread throughout Europe, with Suleiman not only scoring numerous naval victories in the Mediterranean but also sacking and ravaging all European lands his men touched. Charles was forced to immediately divert his attentions to repelling Suleiman and, after bringing his considerable military might down upon the Ottomans, finally managed to check them at the Siege of Vienna in 1529. Despite Charles' victory, Sulieman continued to haunt Charles and Europe in general, continuously breaking trade routes and devastating the Spanish and Italian coasts.

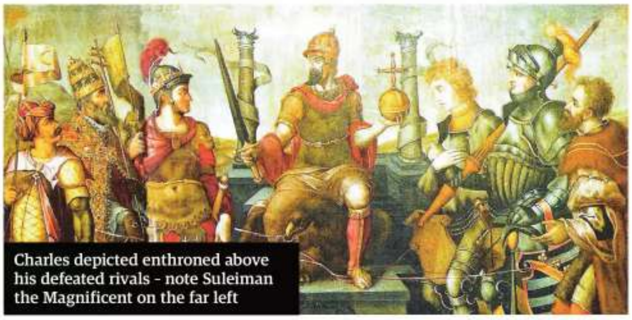
For a while, the threat of Suleiman - while not removed - was muted enough for Charles to consider his newfound lands in the Americas. Spanish conquistadores like the famous Hernan Cortes had been claiming much land in South America and dedicating it to Charles as King of Spain. These territories were rich in precious metals and as such Charles realised that they could prove invaluable in funding his empire. However, Charles was also seemingly concerned about the methods in which the resources and territories were being attained, with Cortes and company frequently slaughtering local populaces to ensure domination. This concern would eventually come to a head when Charles personally convened the famous Valladolid Conference to specifically decide how the lands and people of the New World should be treated.

> Despite spending the majority of his reign fighting a series of enemies, Charles eventually died from malaria, not in battle

Charles' American diversion could not last long though, as in 1536 and then 1542, Charles' french enemy King Francis I allied himself with Suleiman against the Holy Roman Emperor in order to check his power and control over, not just the lands of Europe, but also its religion. This agreement led to the Franco-Ottoman alliance and caused Charles no end of trouble, with a series of wars between the three powers ensuing



A portrait of a young Charles I from 1515. Charles was crowned king a year later



Charles depicted enthroned above his defeated rivals - note Suleiman the Magnificent on the far left

Timeline

1500

Charles born
Charles was born as the eldest son of King Philip I of Castile and Joanna the Mad - a name most likely granted due to probable schizophrenia - in the Flemish city of Ghent. He would go on to be tutored by William de Croy.
24 February 1500

Comuneros revolt
Following Charles taking the kingship of Castile and then proceeding to tax the region heavily to fight his many wars, the citizens revolted and Charles suppressed them brutally. Castile was then absorbed into the larger Habsburg empire officially.
1520

Isabella of Portugal
Charles marries his cousin Isabella of Portugal on March 10th in Seville. Isabella would proceed to take over administrative duties of Spain, with Charles frequently away in his foreign territories. Their son Philip would eventually succeed Charles as King of Spain.
1526

Suleiman stopped
Suleiman the Magnificent's Ottoman Empire invades central Europe, with the forces taking much territory. However, Charles checks them at Vienna and the advance is fatally halted. Suleiman however wins control of the Eastern Mediterranean.
1529

Crowned by pope
Despite being elected as Holy Roman Emperor in June 1519, Charles is only eventually crowned thus 11 years later, with Pope Clement VII conducting the ceremony in Bologna. Charles would be the last Holy Roman Emperor to receive a papal coronation.
1530

> "In many respects Charles reigned very well, inheriting and then controlling a simply massive empire"

throughout the 1530s and 1540s. In fact, the on-off fighting was only finally brought to a partial close with Charles' acceptance of the Truce of Adrianople in 1547. Charles did not want to sign the treaty, however the cost of continuous warfare was bankrupting his lands.

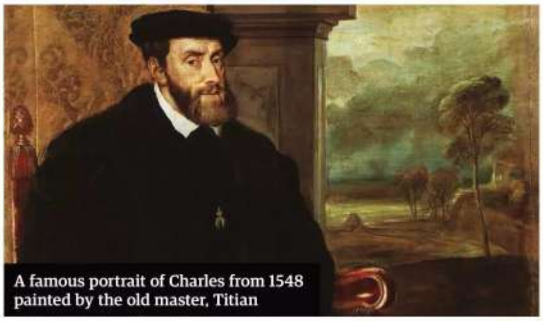
Indeed, with Charles frequently away fighting wars and leaving his lands in the administrative control of others, soon he found his power curtailed, specifically in Germany, the heartland of his Holy Roman Empire. As the year of 1550 rolled around, this unrest and usurpation of power spread into the Netherlands and Charles, realising that a full-blown rebellion was likely on the cards, introduced the death penalty there for any cases of heresy and political dissent.

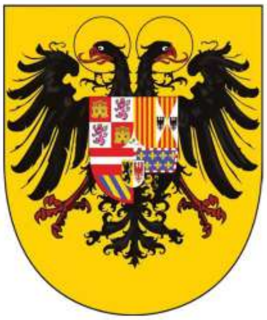
At this point, whether it was obvious to Charles or not, he was now attempting to put out fires that had been kindled by decades of hard rule, high taxation and a nomadic lifestyle. Charles was now 50 and he increasingly found he had neither the will nor the energy to prop up his massive empire. Further, as he entered his fifties a deformity that he had lived with all his life, an enlarged lower jaw, got significantly worse, leaving him with chronic jaw pain and an inability to chew foods properly. Thanks to a life of consuming little but red meat, he also began suffering seriously from gout, which became incredibly painful.

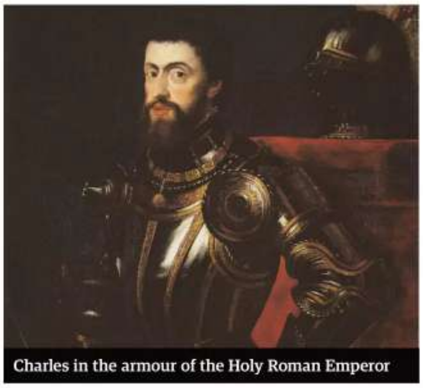
Realising his time was almost up, Charles then decided to end his king- and emperorship on his own terms, abdicating his rule of the Netherlands in 1555, then his rule of the Spanish and Holy Roman Empires in 1556, with his son Philip appointed to succeed him. Following the abdications, Charles self-confined himself to the monastery of St. Yuste in Extremadura, where he was cared for in the last years of his life. Two years later, in 1558, Charles died after contracting malaria, with his body then buried at the monastery.

So what of Charles' reign? In many respects Charles reigned very well, inheriting and then controlling a simply massive empire where he, not only protected it, but expanded it considerably. Further, he frequently succeeded on the battlefield and was politically savvy enough to hold the other rulers in and around Europe from himself and his interests at arm's length. In addition, unlike many other kings of the age, despite his constant warring, Charles was not reported to be bloodthirsty, with him reportedly having strong distaste for combat. On the other hand however, Charles left the Habsburg Empire financially destitute, with Spain near-bankrupt, and this lands of Germany and the Netherlands bitterly divided over religion.

> During his later life Charles also became famous for his chronic gout, which caused him much pain


A famous portrait of Charles from 1548 painted by the old master, Titian




Charles in the armour of the Holy Roman Emperor

Charles I or Charles V?

As well as being Charles I of Spain, Charles was also Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. How did it happen?

Today, Charles I of Spain is not remembered thus but instead as the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. The Holy Roman Emperor was the leader of the Holy Roman Empire, which was formed out of the remnants of the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 408 and then the Carolingian Empire in the late 880s. The Empire consisted of a series of multi-ethnic territories in central Europe - with Germany being the largest - that over period of 600 years dominated the politics and religion of the region, with its leader - the titular Emperor - crowned by the Catholic pope in Rome.

Charles I's grandfather was Maximilian I, who was King of Germany not Spain, as well as being Holy Roman Emperor. However, upon Maximilian's death, the complex laws of hereditary meant that he was the frontrunner as the new Emperor, with a council of electors eventually choosing him to succeed to the crown of the Holy Roman Empire - note, not the Spanish crown (King of Castile), which he had already accepted in 1516, or the rulership of the Netherlands and Burgundy, which he had inherited in 1506 - in 1519. Charles, however, was not officially the Holy Roman Emperor until he was crowned thus by Pope Clement VII in Rome 11 years later in 1530.

Further, despite officially abdicating as Holy Roman Emperor in 1556 in favour of his brother Ferdinand, the Holy Roman Empire's Imperial Diet did not accept the succession technically, so while Ferdinand was in fact the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire from 1556 onwards, it was not until the year of Charles' death two years later that he was officially recognised thus.

Due to the size and importance of the Holy Roman Empire in its day, its titular leader trumps that of Spain's monarch, leading to the history books favouring Charles V over Charles I.

Revolt of Ghent
Along with help from the Duke of Alba, Charles personally suppresses a revolt in Ghent, where political dissent had been firmly controlled for decades. The revolt was instigated by high taxation. After the revolt, Charles stripped the city of all its legal and political freedoms.
1539

Valladolid debate
Charles convenes a conference at Valladolid in order to consider the morality of using force against the indigenous populations of the New World, which Spain was taking a lead in colonising and exploiting. Unfortunately, little consequence comes of the debate.
1550

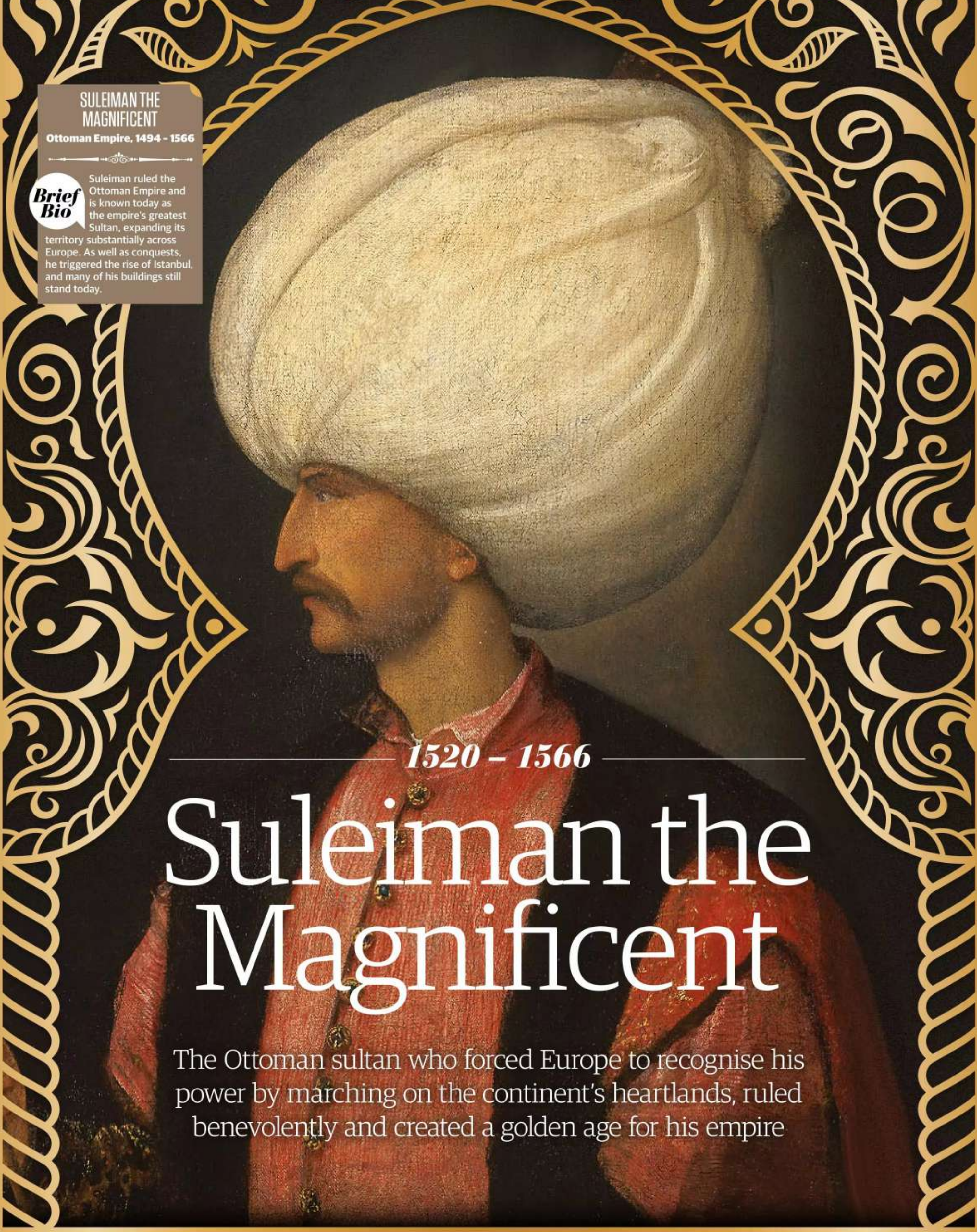
Protestant rebellion
Protestant princes, in alliance with King Henry II of France, rebel against Charles' Roman Catholic rule in central Europe, forcing him to retreat into the Netherlands. Charles abdicated his rule of the Netherlands three years later.
1552

Abdication nation
After previously abdicating his rule of the Netherlands and the county of Charolais the previous year, Charles finally abdicated his Spanish Empire in January. It is passed on to his son Philip, who already controlled Naples and Sicily.
1556

Charles dies
After living in self-imposed exile at the monastery of Yuste in Extremadura for two years, Charles eventually dies from an attack of malaria. His remains were buried at the monastery, however, 26 years later they were transferred to the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial.
21 September 1558

1558

© Alamy



SULEIMAN THE MAGNIFICENT

Ottoman Empire, 1494 - 1566

Brief Bio

Suleiman ruled the Ottoman Empire and is known today as the empire's greatest Sultan, expanding its territory substantially across Europe. As well as conquests, he triggered the rise of Istanbul, and many of his buildings still stand today.

1520 – 1566

Suleiman the Magnificent

The Ottoman sultan who forced Europe to recognise his power by marching on the continent's heartlands, ruled benevolently and created a golden age for his empire

At the beginning of the 16th century, the balance of power in Europe was held by three dynamic young rulers: Henry VIII of England, Francis I of France and Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire. News of the accession of the 26-year-old Suleiman I to the throne of the distant Ottoman Empire in 1520 barely raised an eyebrow. But in just over a year, the sultan's name would be known throughout the Western world and in his lifetime Europeans would address him by an even grander title: Suleiman the Magnificent.

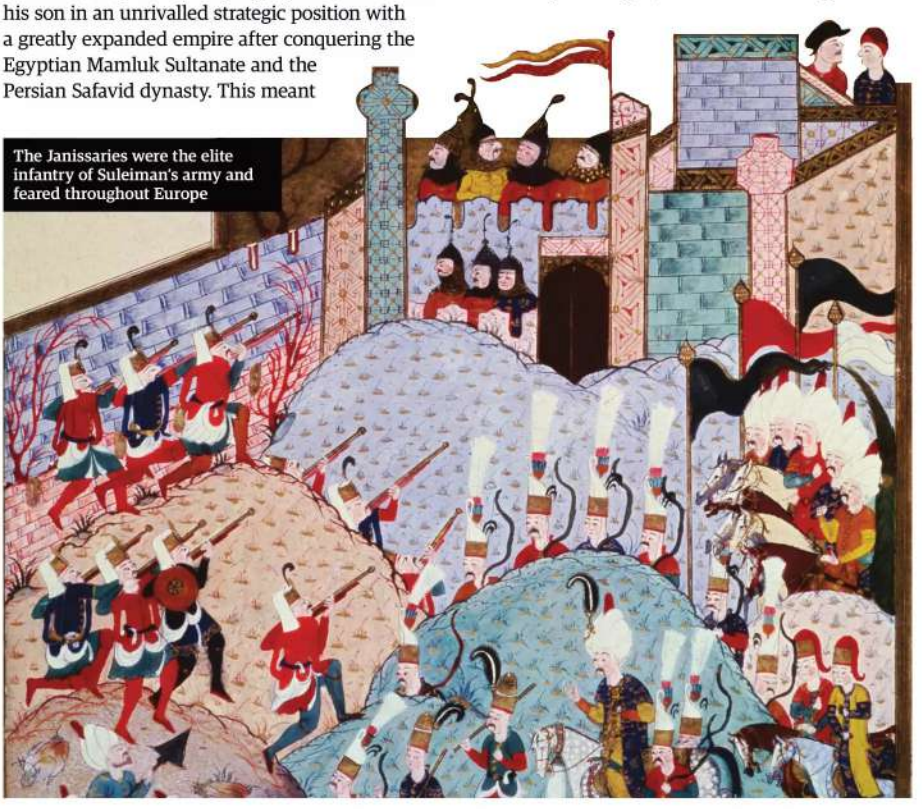
Our earliest report about Suleiman describes him as being tall with a round face, wiry aquiline nose, a neck that was a little too long, and with piercing hazel eyes and broad forehead. He received a royal education from the age of seven, when he was sent to Topkapı Palace in the Ottoman capital, Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul).

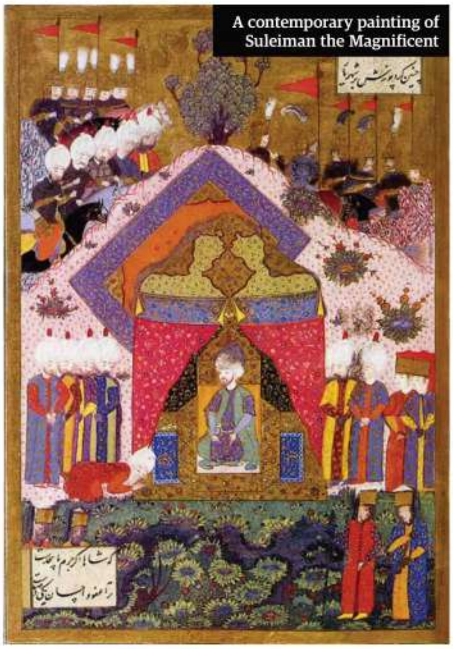
Among the elegant halls lined with blue, white and turquoise mosaic tiles and surrounded by fine carpets and textiles, famous scholars tutored young Suleiman in history, science, literature, theology and military tactics. He was a gifted poet and a linguist, fluent in five languages – Turkish, Arabic, Chagatai (a Central Asian Turkic dialect), Persian and Serbian. In fact, part of the reason the Europeans were so unconcerned with Suleiman's coronation was that he was known to be scholarly, not a warmonger like his father.

Suleiman's father, Selim I (also known as Selim the Grim), reigned for only eight years, but he left his son in an unrivalled strategic position with a greatly expanded empire after conquering the Egyptian Mamluk Sultanate and the Persian Safavid dynasty. This meant as well as governing modern-day Greece, Turkey and the coast of the Black Sea, Suleiman inherited Egypt, Libya, Syria, Palestine, the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia and the Algerian coast. Though Selim had been hostile towards Europe, it was generally assumed that his son would continue expanding further east. But the young, ambitious sultan had other ideas.

Suleiman and Charles V harboured similar ambitions, both significantly greater than their other European counterparts, which would keep the pair on a collision course for most of their reigns. While Henry VIII dreamed of reclaiming France and Francis fantasised about retaking the Duchy of Milan, Charles was fervently dedicated to uniting and expanding Christendom under his own global monarchy. This would include recapturing Jerusalem and even Suleiman's beloved capital, Constantinople. The sultan, on the other hand, was significantly influenced by stories of Alexander the Great and saw himself as taking up the mighty ruler's mantle.

Suleiman may have also envied Charles who, through numerous inheritances, ruled an even greater territory than him. This included swathes of western, central and southern Europe, along with the Spanish colonies in the Americas and Asia. Long before Victorian Britain appropriated it, Charles' realm was described by Spanish priest Fray Francisco de Ugalde as "the empire on which the sun never sets".


The Janissaries were the elite infantry of Suleiman's army and feared throughout Europe

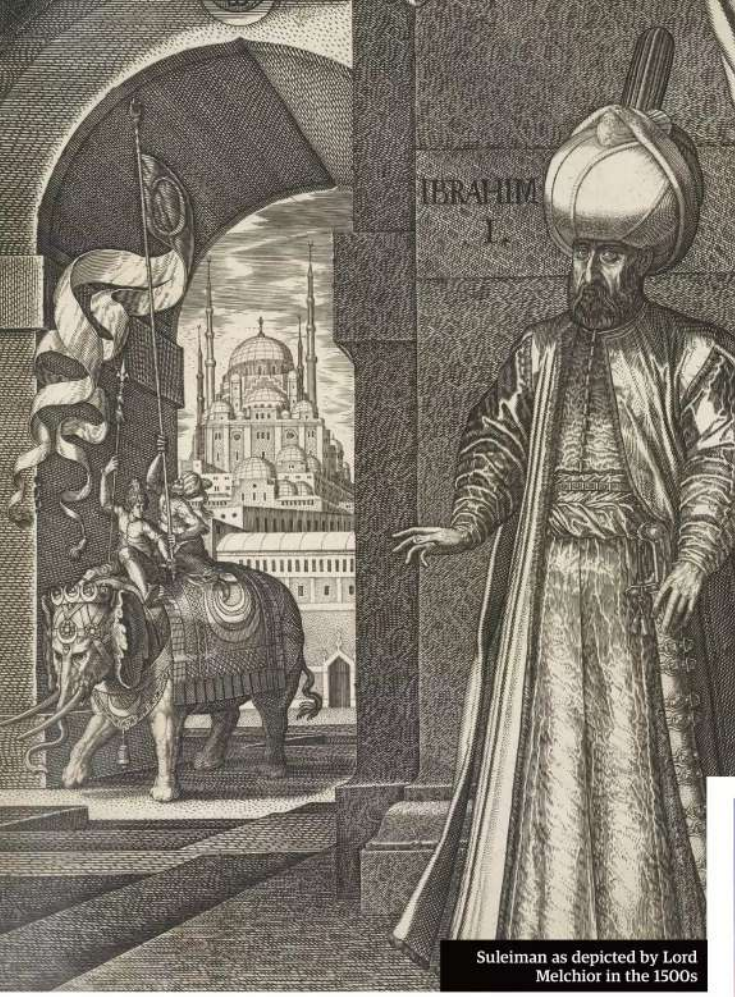

A contemporary painting of Suleiman the Magnificent

Charles, who was also connected to Henry and Francis by marriage (at least until the English king divorced Catherine of Aragon), was a major political player, while Suleiman was an outsider. And yet, as history would show, his influence over the course of the 16th century was immense and, as one biographer wrote, even Charles, the most powerful man in Europe, spent most of his life dancing to the tune called by the sultan.

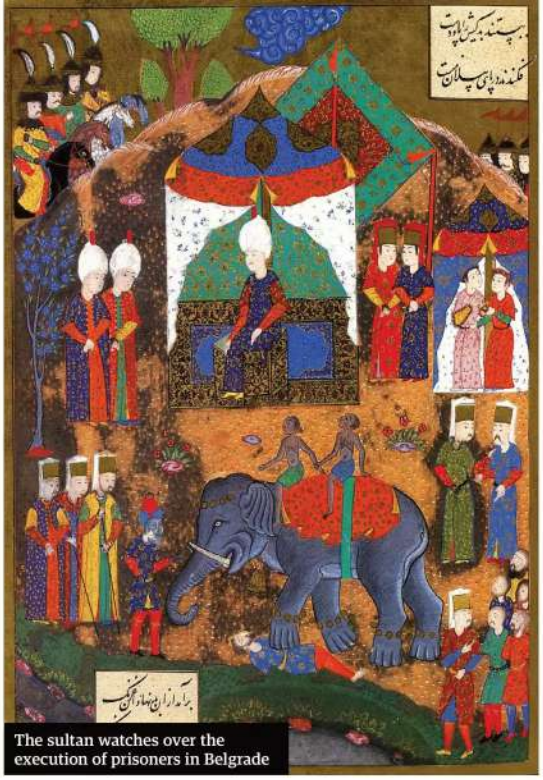
In July 1521, the newly crowned Suleiman made his intensions very clear: he marched west. At the head of an army of 6,000 horsemen of the imperial guard, the elite infantry units of the Janissaries, foot soldiers and 200 strapping young men from prominent families, the sultan laid siege to Belgrade, a fortified city on the Danube River, then part of the Kingdom of Hungary. With a flotilla of ships also blockading the city to prevent reinforcement, it soon fell. However, unlike Charles' wild and destructive troops sacking Rome in 1527, Suleiman's army provided monetary compensation for property damaged during the invasion and any man caught marauding was immediately executed.

Suleiman had gained a foothold in Europe's heartlands, but rather than advance further, he turned his attention to the island of Rhodes. This was a Mediterranean stronghold for the Order of the Knights of Saint John, also known as the Knights Hospitaller, who were a hold-over from

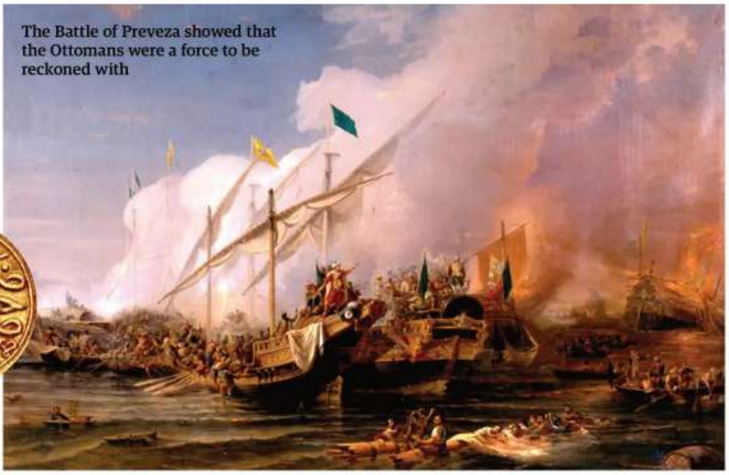
"The sultan was significantly influenced by stories of Alexander the Great"



Suleiman as depicted by Lord Melchior in the 1500s



The sultan watches over the execution of prisoners in Belgrade



The Battle of Preveza showed that the Ottomans were a force to be reckoned with

the Crusades. The knights were already a blight on the Ottoman Empire's ships, stealing cargoes of grain and gold and enslaving their Muslim crews. Now that Suleiman had declared war on the West, the knights could pose an even greater threat.

The sultan had inherited an already powerful naval fleet from his father and had made a considerable effort to strengthen it. With approximately 400 well-equipped ships and 100,000 fit and loyal men, he emerged victorious in Rhodes in December 1522 – though it took six months of brutal fighting.

Again, Suleiman was shrewdly merciful. Out of his respect for their ardent defence, he gave the knights 12 days to leave and allowed them to take their weapons and any valuables or religious icons they desired. Suleiman also ordered that any inhabitants of the island who wished to leave would be able to do so at any time within a three-year period.

Suleiman chose to rule not through fear but by winning over an otherwise hostile population, and so the inhabitants of Rhodes were encouraged to stay, albeit as his subjects. Importantly, he did not compel the Christians to adopt Islam and he promised that no church would be desecrated or turned into a mosque. In fact, much of Suleiman's approach to expansion was very diplomatic.

For decades, the Moors and Jews expelled from Spain flocked to Constantinople, which acquired a reputation for being a city of tolerance; all religions could be practised freely without fear of persecution. These new citizens contributed their skills as merchants, craftsmen and bankers. It is true that all non-Muslims had to pay an additional tax, which contributed to the Ottoman coffers, but they could live in peace.

Suleiman sent envoys into the mountain ranges near Transylvania, to the chieftains of the Bosnians and Croats, where he cultivated loyalty through peaceful relations. In parts of Greece that had come under Ottoman rule, it was reported that farmers flourished more than they had under the Venetians. Greek and French merchants enjoyed a thriving trade and the Ottoman Empire was generally viewed as a realm of stability. What began as a fear of a 'Turkish Terror' evolved into 'Pax Turcica', the Turkish Peace.

Things were not the same in Western Europe. Francis I and Charles V were almost constantly at war; in the words of Francis' sister, they were born to hate each other. Interestingly, it was his enmity with Charles that forced Francis to look to the Ottoman Empire as a potential ally.

When the Holy Roman emperor took Francis hostage after the Battle of Pavia in 1525, the French king's mother suggested a rapprochement with the sultan. Suleiman saw an opportunity, a new way of furthering his position on the chessboard of Europe, and wrote a rousing and reassuring letter of support to Francis. It was a circumspect and subtle beginning to the Franco-Ottoman alliance that would span centuries, one judged by Europe as "the impious alliance" and "the sacrilegious union of the Lily and the Crescent."

> "Suleiman's formidable elite infantry were the feared Janissaries"

The sultan's architect

Mimar Sinan's creative genius helped forge Suleiman's golden age

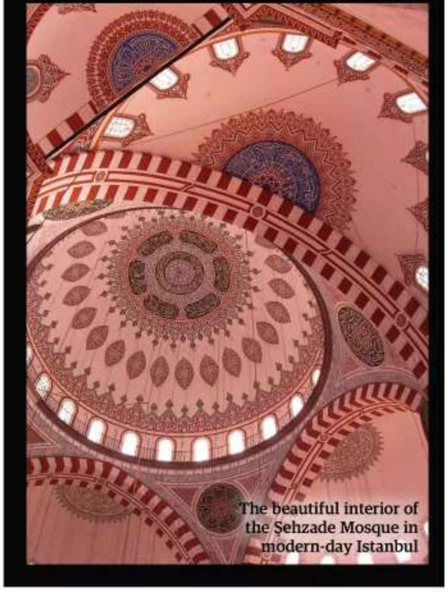
Mimar Sinan was a Janissary in Suleiman's army for most of his early life and eventually became captain of the guard. This allowed him to travel abroad on numerous campaigns to places like Egypt and Greece, inspiring and developing his love for architecture and engineering.

Although he only began his architectural career at the age of 46, his flair and genius were quickly recognised and earned him the position of royal architect. His career spanned three sultans – Suleiman and his two successors, Selim II and Murad II. In their honour, Sinan would complete over 300 structures, ranging from mosques to palaces, baths and pavilions, many of which are considered to be the finest examples of Islamic architecture.

Sinan is most famous for three architectural triumphs: the Şehzade Mosque, built for Suleiman's son Mehmed; the dazzling Süleymaniye Mosque in modern-day Istanbul; and the elegant Mosque of Selim II in Edirne. He was greatly influenced by the 6th-century Byzantine architecture of Constantinople, in particular the Hagia Sophia, whose domes dominated the capital's skyline.

Sinan's works became the apogee of Ottoman architecture as he used the classical dome structure for his mosques, each erected majestically on top of one another, framed by tall, slender minarets and surrounded by peaceful gardens. He began to play with the design, building pyramid-like bases, changing the proportions, opening the interior of the structure, and creating windows to allow more light.

The architect is believed to have remarked, "The Şehzade is my apprentice work, Süleimaniye my achievement, and the Selimiye my masterwork." Yet any visitor to Istanbul would agree that his Süleimaniye Mosque was a triumph of architecture and design, a mesh of angular and spherical surfaces, and today it still stands as a colossal symbol of the Ottoman Empire.

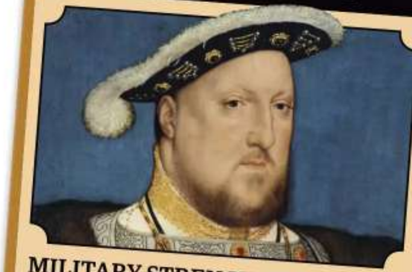


The beautiful interior of the Şehzade Mosque in modern-day Istanbul

Empire Top Trumps

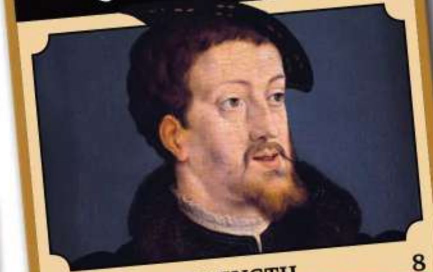
How do the leaders compare against each other?

HENRY VIII



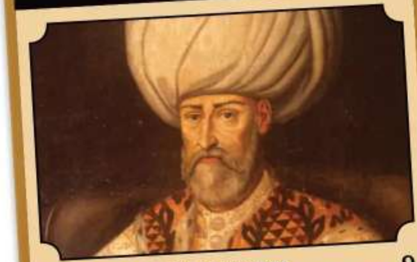
MILITARY STRENGTH	WANTED TO CONSOLIDATE HIS DYNASTY	5
RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE	LOW-MEDIUM	4
POPULATION	3 MILLION	2
TOTAL AREA	151,000 KM²	1
CONQUESTS	NOT MANY ATTEMPTS MADE	2

CHARLES V



MILITARY STRENGTH	HAD A LARGE, FEROCIOUS ARMY	8
RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE	LOW	2
POPULATION	28 MILLION	9
TOTAL AREA	4,000,000 KM²	9
CONQUESTS	VERY MILITARILY CAPABLE	8

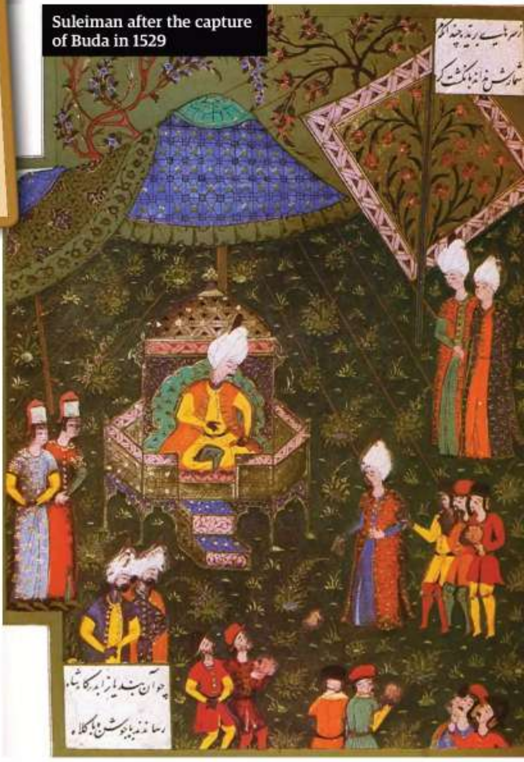
SULEIMAN



MILITARY STRENGTH	LED THE FEARED JANISSARIES	9
RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE	HIGH	9
POPULATION	5 MILLION	6
TOTAL AREA	2,273,720 KM²	7
CONQUESTS	AN ABLE MILITARY STRATEGIST	9

In 1526, Suleiman, with Francis' tacit encouragement, marched on Hungary and defeated their king at the Battle of Mohács. But the Ottomans' most ambitious expedition and thrust towards the West would ultimately result in failure: in 1529, Suleiman marched through the valley of the Danube and laid siege to Vienna. It would be his first defeat and, despite a second attempt in 1532, the very heart of the Holy Roman Empire eluded him.

Still, Suleiman's armies had struck fear among his European counterparts. His formidable elite infantry were the feared Janissaries, formed from prisoners of war and slaves but mostly recruited from Christian children in Greece, Albania and the Balkans. Taken into the heart of the Ottoman Empire, they were trained and tutored to become the finest troops and were the most loyal defenders of the sultan.



Suleiman after the capture of Buda in 1529

Roxelana: The Ottoman Anne Boleyn

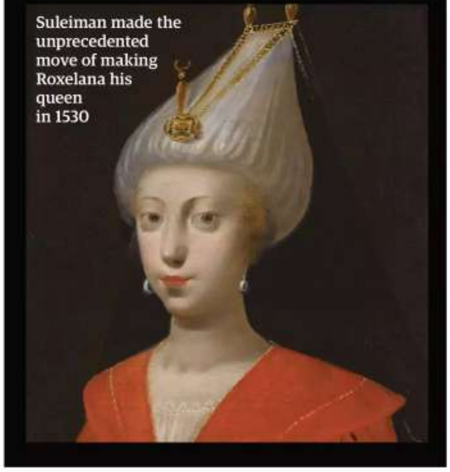
Roxelana's astonishing success at Suleiman's court was attributed not only to her beauty but also to her intelligence and ambition

A young woman appeared at Suleiman's court in 1523, captured by Turkish raiders in Galatia. It is believed that she was originally from Ruthenia, in present-day Ukraine, and so she was given the nickname 'Roxelana', meaning 'the Russian' or the 'Ruthenian One'. She was fair with long red hair and, while in the sultan's harem, her beauty, bright, witty nature and sharp intelligence caught the sultan's eye and she soon became a favourite. But this was only the beginning.

Suleiman made the unprecedented move of forsaking all other women in his harem and became devoted only to Roxelana. It was rumoured that she ensured things would stay that way by burning the harem down so that to remain with her beloved she had to move into the sultan's apartments until a new harem could be rebuilt. It never was.

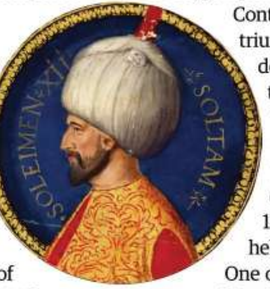
Such was Suleiman's unwavering devotion to her that he made her chief consort, supplanting Mahidevran, mother to the sultan's only son. But it was his unprecedented decision to marry Roxelana, making her his queen, that astounded the country as it broke with centuries of tradition. As with so many powerful and influential women, it was rumoured by those who resented Roxelana's success that she had 'bewitched' the sultan. Certainly his poems to Roxelana remain some of the most famous and passionate love poems of the age and suggest a man utterly entranced.

But Roxelana was an extraordinary woman. She was intelligent, ambitious, charitable and strategic. She was not only wife and queen, but for many years she served as Suleiman's chief advisor on matters of state and she played an influential role in foreign and domestic politics. She had numerous political rivals, namely Suleiman's loyal friend and advisor Ibrahim Pasha, with whom she was locked in a deadly battle for Suleiman's favour and from which she emerged triumphant.



Suleiman made the unprecedented move of making Roxelana his queen in 1530

The Austrian ambassador Ogier de Busbecq wrote some years later that the sultan's forces showed incredible discipline: they were patient, obedient, never prone to brawling and, above all, fearless. They abstained from alcohol and lived on a diet of turnips, cucumber, garlic, salt and vinegar. They only drank water, which they mixed, once or twice a day, with flour, a small bit of butter, powdered beef and spices – perhaps the Ottoman Empire's answer to the modern day protein shake. Busbecq concluded, "I dread to think what the future holds for us when I compare the Turkish system to ours."



But ambassadors wrote to their monarchs of more than the Ottomans' military might. The details of the Ottoman court itself, described in vivid detail in the reports of Holy Roman, French and Venetian ambassadors, reveal a world of grandeur, opulence and refinement. Soon, Ottoman dress, art and culture permeated Europe, becoming some of the most highly prized elements of the period. Throughout Suleiman's reign there was enormous admiration for this inventive, intelligent monarch. Suleiman had once been called the 'Scourge of Heaven' – now he was known as 'the Magnificent'.

Suleiman wore elaborate floor-length caftans made of satins and silks, often lined with sable and patterned in ways that made even the most extravagant of European monarchs look drab and pedestrian. He was also partial to shirts made of soft white linen, lined with white cotton faced with rose-coloured silk, all perfumed with aloe wood, and the sultan never wore the same clothes twice.

He dined on a silver table using silver plates and drank wine from a goblet made from a single piece of turquoise. With over 50 courses served by 200 attendants wearing red silk and gold-embroidered hats, the sultan and his court would eat in halls filled with thick carpets and cloths of gold. His tables were laden with an array of seafood from the Bosphorus: lobster, sturgeon, muscles, swordfish. Henry VIII may have a reputation for indulgence, even gluttony, but his feasts paled in comparison to Suleiman's.

The beauty of Turkish dress and carpets captured the attention and imagination of Europe. From the Doge's Palace in Venice – through which Ottoman art, textiles and culture flowed – to Hampton Court, plush, vibrant textiles and carpets were a symbol of wealth and sophistication. Henry VIII himself, on several occasions, even participated in court masques dressed as a Turk.

In 1532, Venetian merchants sold Suleiman a gold throne studded with jewels and pearls, estimated to cost 40,000 ducats. He sat in his great hall on his ornate throne receiving gifts: cotton from Egypt, damask from Syria; from Mosul, silver plates, cloth of gold and lapis lazuli. Suleiman was particularly fond of Chinese porcelain and he imported furs and Arabian horses. Even on campaigns, the sultan made a strong impression.

Contemporary descriptions of his triumphal march to Vienna in 1532 describe foot soldiers and cavalry troops followed by standard-bearers carrying flags with Ottoman crescents and the prophet Muhammad's name embroidered in pearls and jewels. 12 pages followed, carrying costly helmets glittering with gemstones. One of the most famous ones was a golden helmet of four crowns, all with enormous 12-carat pearls, diamonds, rubies and a large turquoise stone. It was a triumph of Venetian craftsmanship and, rather curiously, bore a striking resemblance to the papal tiara.

Suleiman rode on a magnificent horse, the saddle of which was estimated to be worth 70,000 ducats, while its chamfron – the plate designed to protect the horse's face – boasted a piece of turquoise as large as an egg. The sultan wore a large turban and a fur-lined gold brocade caftan of royal purple embroidered with jewels. Around his neck, he wore a gold chain that was so heavy it required attendants to ride on both sides to relieve the weight.

But Suleiman himself earned the admiration of visitors to his court. Ambassador Busbecq was impressed by his wise approach to advisors and councillors. The ambassador wrote that "in making his appointments the sultan pays no regard to any pretensions on the score of wealth or rank, nor does he take into consideration recommendations or popularity; he considers each case on its own merits, and examines carefully into the character, ability, and disposition of the man. Each man carries in his own hand his ancestry and his position in life, which he may make or mar as he will."

While the Europeans described Suleiman as magnificent for his opulence, his subjects gave him the title of 'Kanuni', meaning 'Lawgiver'. He embarked on a series of administrative reviews and made major legislative changes in the areas of education, taxation and criminal law. His reforms assisted in bridging the two forms of Ottoman law, sultanic and Sharia, and were called 'Qanun-e-Osmani', or the 'Ottoman Laws'. These would stay in place for three centuries.

Suleiman was also a great patron of artists and philosophers alike. Artists and highly skilled calligraphers, such as Ahmad Karahisari and

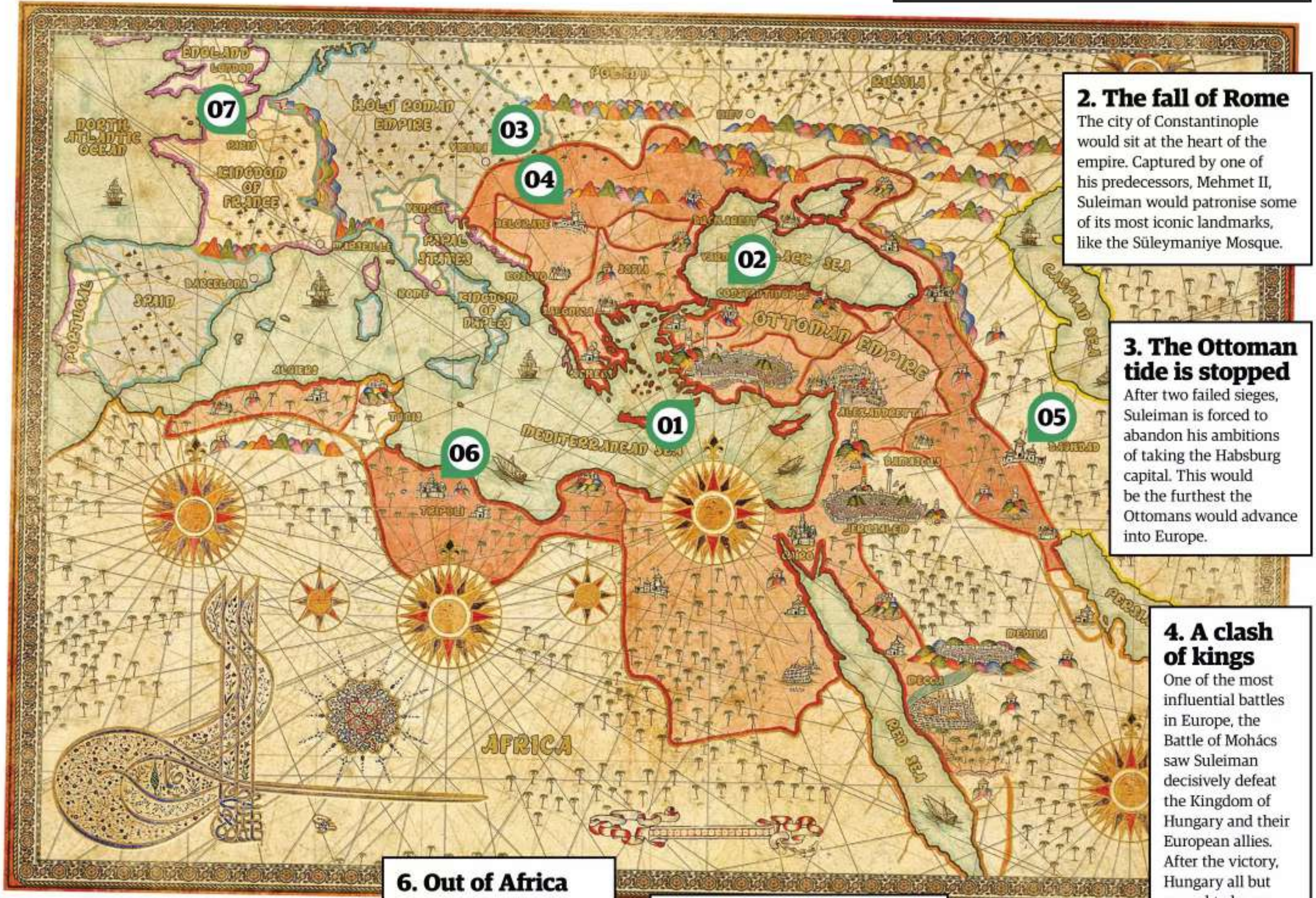
> "Suleiman was a great patron of artists and philosophers alike"

The empire of Suleiman

The Ottoman Empire would flourish and grow under Suleiman's leadership

1. End of an era

Garrisoned by the Knights Hospitaller, the island of Rhodes was one of the last Latin strongholds left from the Crusades. After a long and bloody siege, Suleiman's might overcame the order and captured the fortress.


England
London
07
North Atlantic Ocean
Paris
Kingdom of France
Holy Roman Empire
Poland
03
Vienna
04
Venice
Belgrade
Marseille
Papal States
Barcelona
Spain
Portugal
Rome
Kingdom of Naples
Kosovo
Sofia
Athens
Algiers
Tunis
06
Tripoli
Mediterranean Sea
01
Russia
Kiev
Bucharest
Varna
02
Black Sea
Constantinople
Ottoman Empire
Alexandretta
Damascus
Jerusalem
Cairo
Caspian Sea
05
Baghdad
Persia
Medina
Mecca
Red Sea
Africa

2. The fall of Rome

The city of Constantinople would sit at the heart of the empire. Captured by one of his predecessors, Mehmet II, Suleiman would patronise some of its most iconic landmarks, like the Süleymaniye Mosque.

3. The Ottoman tide is stopped

After two failed sieges, Suleiman is forced to abandon his ambitions of taking the Habsburg capital. This would be the furthest the Ottomans would advance into Europe.

4. A clash of kings

One of the most influential battles in Europe, the Battle of Mohács saw Suleiman decisively defeat the Kingdom of Hungary and their European allies. After the victory, Hungary all but ceased to be an independent entity.

5. Arch rivals

Territorial disputes between the Ottomans and the neighbouring Safavid dynasty of Iran saw war break out in 1532. The capture of Baghdad in 1534 solidified Suleiman's rule in parts of Mesopotamia for the next 100 years.

6. Out of Africa

The lawless lands of the Libyan coast were brought under Ottoman rule with the capture of Tripoli in 1551. From this base, the Barbary pirates would have free reign to attack shipping throughout the Mediterranean.

7. The Crescent and the Lily

The alliance between France and the Ottoman Empire shocked the rest of Christian Europe to its very core. This important foreign alliance was maintained until the Napoleonic wars.

KEY

🟥 Empire conquered by Suleiman
🟧 Empire inherited by Suleiman
🟦 Empire of Charles V

Kara Memi, were welcome at the royal court. The sultan financed developments in numerous fields, particularly in the areas of manuscript painting, textiles and ceramics.

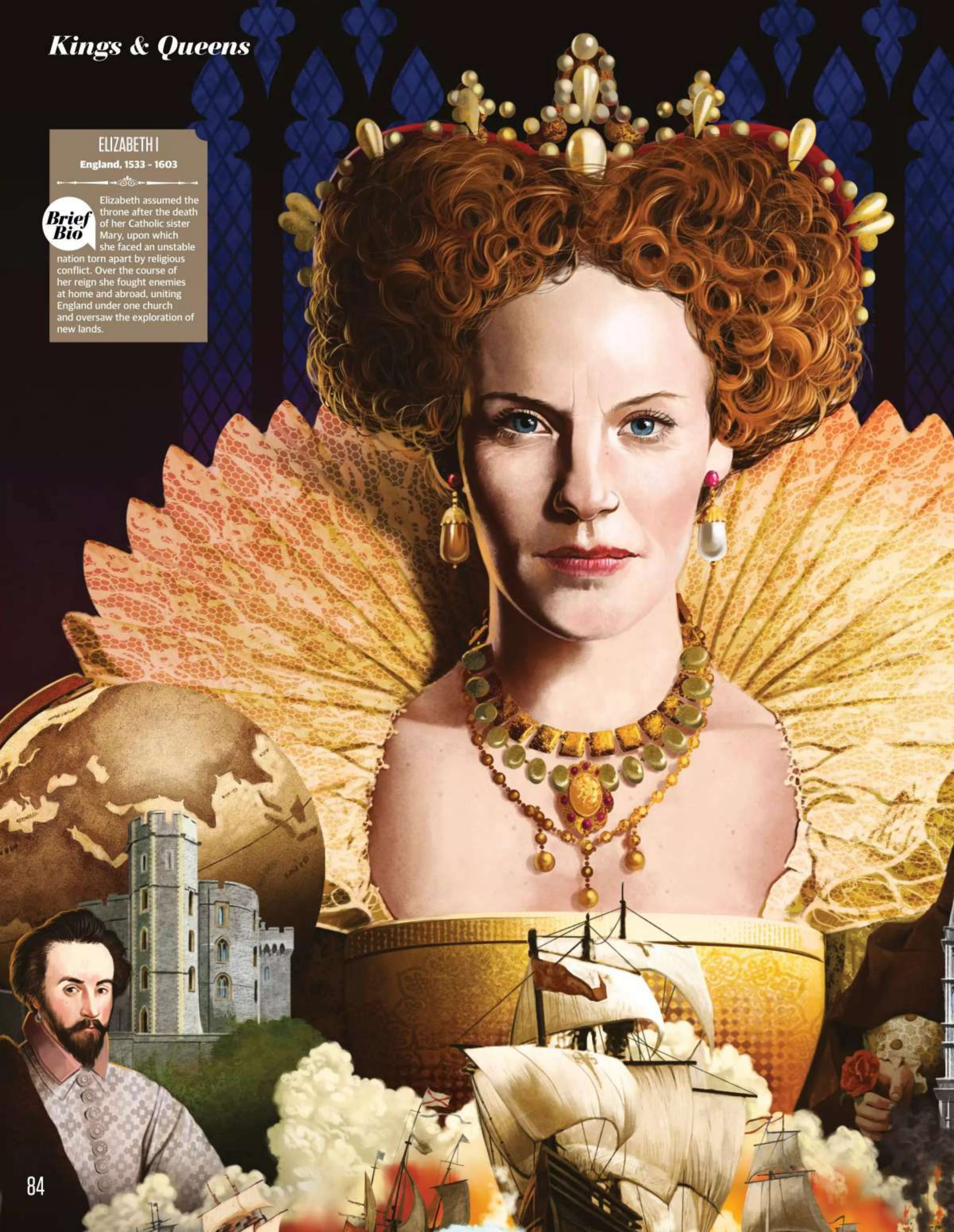
In his youth, as with most sultans, Suleiman learned a trade, in his case goldsmithing, and he personally oversaw the work of craftsmen in Topkapı Palace. He also commissioned an ambitious building programme and was a patron of the great architect, Mimar Sinan, who built the iconic Süleymaniye and Selimiye Mosques.

Suleiman loved poetry and considered himself something of a poet, writing under the pseudonym 'Muhabbi', meaning 'beloved and affectionate friend'. His works have been described as "lyrical, mystical, humble and sincere" and he focused on the loneliness of his position, his love of his country, his acceptance of destiny and his love of beautiful things.

Perhaps above all, he wrote passionate and romantic poetry to the woman who would convert to Islam to be with him and transcend the position of concubine to stand by his side as queen – Roxelana. Towards the end of his reign, however, Suleiman gave up his rich costumes, jewels, gold, wine, poetry and music.

Like Charles, Suleiman seemed to prefer religious humility in his old age. He died at the age of 72, fighting Charles' successor, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II. His death was kept a secret lest it destroy morale. In keeping with tradition, his body was washed, hands laid across his chest, and his nose, eyes and ears were stuffed with cotton wool. He was then wrapped in a single piece of silk and buried in his beloved Süleymaniye Mosque facing Mecca.

At the time of his death, Suleiman was the longest-reigning sultan of the Ottoman Empire and he had outlived his four European adversaries, with whom he had spent decades in enmity and alliance. Never again would the Ottoman Empire command such respect and admiration.



ELIZABETH I

England, 1533 - 1603

Brief Bio

Elizabeth assumed the throne after the death of her Catholic sister Mary, upon which she faced an unstable nation torn apart by religious conflict. Over the course of her reign she fought enemies at home and abroad, uniting England under one church and oversaw the exploration of new lands.

1558 – 1603

The turbulent reign of Elizabeth I

She fought off foreign invasions and domestic rebellions but did she really preside over a golden age?

In 1588, against the advice of her most trusted aides, Elizabeth I rode out on her grey gelding to address her troops gathered at Tilbury in Essex in preparation of repelling the expected invasion force of the Spanish Armada. Looking out at the assembled faces before her, she delivered a speech that would go down in history and for many would forever define her: "I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king - and of a king of England too."

The speech would have to be transcribed and redistributed for the soldiers who were unable to hear the queen but they had all seen their monarch, armoured and on her steed, ready to stand by them to repel the Catholic invasion. This image of Elizabeth has been the key to our popular perception of her for centuries, but there's much more to her. Elizabeth was cunning and capricious, but she could be blinded by affection, if only temporarily. She was tremendously clever, with an almost unfailing sense of what her people wanted or needed from her, but had to see off foreign invasion attempts and homegrown rebellions. While she was sitting on the throne of England the country became acquainted with some of its greatest triumphs and darkest hours.

When Elizabeth came to the throne in November 1558, the whole of Europe was on tenterhooks. How would the new Protestant queen follow the reign of her Catholic sister Mary? With an unstable nation and conspiracies at home and abroad, the situation required diplomacy, intelligence and bravery; three qualities which Elizabeth had always had in ample supply. In fact, the unstable situation was nothing new to her; Elizabeth's position had been precarious from the moment she was born. The daughter of Henry VIII's second wife, Anne Boleyn, she was immediately deemed as illegitimate by any Catholic nations, who regarded the king's divorce of Catherine of Aragon as illegal. In their eyes, Catherine's daughter Mary was the only rightful heir to the throne.

Although both parents had been desperate for a boy, Anne would be a doting mother to her infant child, but she was sent to the executioner's block in 1536 after failing to produce a male heir for her king. Although Henry's third wife Jane Seymour was kind to Elizabeth and Mary, she had her own child to attend to with the birth of her son and Henry's heir, Edward. Henry himself would not see much of Elizabeth until 1542, when he decided the time had come to reacquaint himself with his young daughter. He found her to be intelligent and charming, and decided that he would reinstate both Mary and Elizabeth back into his lineage.

In 1543, Henry married Catherine Parr, his last wife, and relations within the royal family warmed, as Mary took a maternal interest in young Edward, while Elizabeth enjoyed a sisterly relationship with both. However, when Edward took the throne upon their father's death, cracks started to form. First, Elizabeth had to contend with the amorous attentions of Catherine's new husband Thomas Seymour, which caused a scandal at court in 1548. Seymour's intentions were seen as treasonous, and Elizabeth was reported to be pregnant. The young princess denied these rumours, confounding her interrogator. "She hath a very good wit and nothing is gotten of her but by great policy," he wrote. This

"She was tremendously clever, with an almost unfailing sense of what her people wanted, or needed from her"

How good was Elizabeth at balancing the books?

While the popular image is that Mary left England in a sorry state, Leanda de Lisle explains that Elizabeth's fiscal behaviour was far from immaculate. Mary left England £227,000 in debt, while her sister produced debts of £350,000. "Mary's reign was not a 'disaster'. The popular image of Mary - always 'Bloody Mary', rarely Mary I - has been greatly influenced by a combination of sexual and religious prejudice," explains De Lisle. "Mary I had named Elizabeth as her heir, despite her personal feelings towards her sister, and so allowed the crown to be inherited peacefully. Elizabeth continued to refuse to name anyone. In 1562, believing she was dying, she asked for Robert Dudley to be made Lord Protector with an income of £20,000." Elizabeth was notoriously reluctant to engage in warfare because of its costs and risk, but the Spanish conflict dragged on for years, while she awarded monopolies to her favourites at court and crops failed. "While we remember Elizabeth's success in repelling the Armada in 1588," says De Lisle, "We forget that the war continued and impoverished the country and the crown, a situation made worse by the corruption of court officials including notorious high-ranking figures such as Robert Cecil. People starved in the 1590s and the elite even began to fear possible revolution."

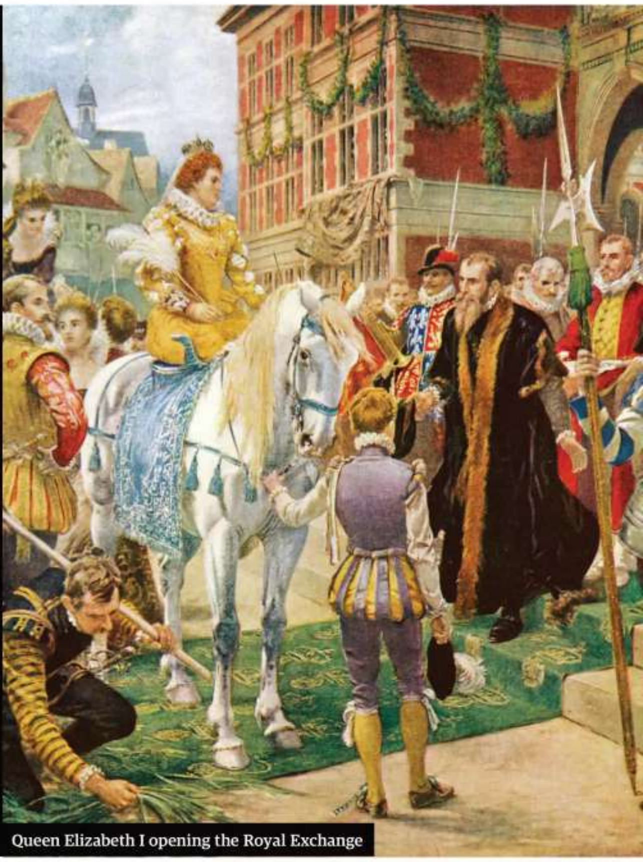
Verdict

Elizabeth was forced to deal with circumstances beyond her control, such as poor harvests and an ongoing conflict with Spain, but the fact is that she was not the financial marvel many believe her to be.

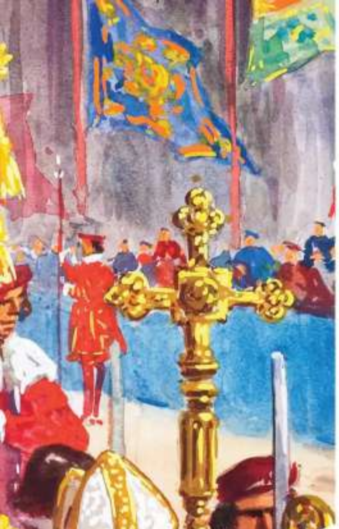
Borrowing money in the 16th century

Before the English merchant Thomas Gresham came to prominence, the Tudors had borrowed money from the great European banks such as the Antwerp Exchange. However, these banks charged a high interest rate and it was generally acknowledged that going around Europe borrowing money did nothing to improve England's image as a serious power. Money could also be borrowed from independent merchants, such as Horatio Palavicino, from whom Elizabeth was forced to borrow money late in her reign. Gresham had previously helped Edward VI rid himself of most of his debts and founded the Royal Exchange in 1571 to challenge the power of Antwerp.

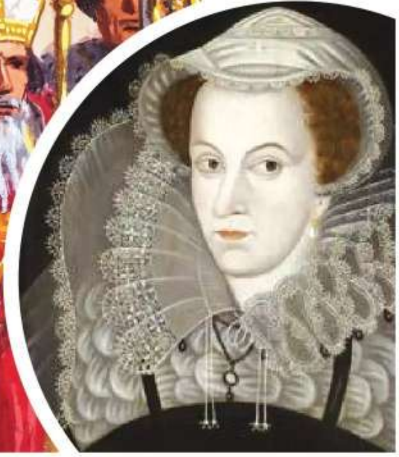
Now that Elizabeth could seek loans from within her realm, she was able to exert greater pressure to get what she wanted, while Parliament could grant her more funds if they chose. Royal revenues were supposed to cover the basic expenses of governance, while Parliament could add to the war chest. Later in her reign, she began to use increasingly severe taxation, which contributed to her decreasing popularity.



Queen Elizabeth I opening the Royal Exchange



Picture depicting the coronation of Elizabeth I in 1558



Portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots, who was executed after being found guilty of plotting against Elizabeth I

Was a religious compromise met?

The Church of England was one of compromise and middle ground. While Elizabeth was a Protestant, she didn't hold the puritanical beliefs of some of her council members. She introduced the Act of Supremacy in 1558, which reaffirmed England's separation from Rome and established her as the head of the Church. Elizabeth understood the dangers of trying to impose religion and allowed Catholicism to continue, provided it took place in secret.

However, Leanda de Lisle reminds us that we should not forget Elizabeth's willingness to crack down when necessary. "Elizabeth's conservatism and pragmatism has seen her described as a religious moderate, in contrast to the 'fanatical' Mary," she explains. "But as the new Protestant Queen of a largely Catholic country Elizabeth was necessarily moderate, and as her reign grew longer, she proved that, like Mary, she could be utterly ruthless when faced by a threat. The hundreds of executions of villagers following the Northern Rebellion far exceeded anything her predecessors had done in similar circumstances; her later persecution of Catholics was also relentless and cruel. It is a little-known fact that she also burned heretics – namely Anabaptists – these were far fewer in number than Mary's victims, but then there weren't that many Anabaptists!" She executed both Protestants and Catholics for publicly disobeying the laws of the Church of England. However, events in Europe show the English Queen in a much more favourable light. Comparatively, Elizabeth was extremely tolerant. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris showed the fervour with which Catholic Europeans detested Protestants. She was also much more tolerant than many of her advisors.

Verdict

Elizabeth successfully found a moderate middle ground in a very turbulent time during her reign, but would crack down mercilessly if the rules she had laid down were broken.

VS

Catholic

1 The services were held in Latin, countermanding the reformation's ideal that everyone should be able to understand. The English prayer book was banned.

2 Church furnishings were restored to their former lavish state and the buildings were now decorated completely with Catholic artwork.

3 Catholic Mass was reintroduced, and Holy Communion was now banned by law.

4 The clergy were not allowed to marry. Priests who had married before the new law came into effect were given a choice of two options: leave their families or lose their job.

C of E

1 The image of the minister became much simpler. They were not allowed to wear Roman Catholic vestments, such as the surplice.

2 All rood lofts, a screen portraying the crucifixion, a common feature in Catholic churches, were removed. The Pope was not the head of the church.

3 The Bishop's Bible, which was in English rather than Latin, was restored, opening it up to a wider readership.

4 There was a general removal of 'superstition', such as making the sign of the cross during communion. Simplicity was what the Puritans strived for.

practice would serve her well once Mary took the throne but not all players were as skilled in the game of thrones; Seymour was executed the following year.

When the staunchly Catholic Mary refused to convert, Edward began proceedings to remove both his sisters from the line to the throne, fixing his hopes on his cousin, Lady Jane Grey, instead. However, the prince was seldom in good health during his short life, so it was no surprise that he died before the contract could be finalised and Mary became the new Queen of England. Just as Edward had asked Mary to change her faith, the new queen was determined that her sister should convert. She acquiesced without enthusiasm, but it was clear to both Protestants and Catholics that her true allegiance still lay with her father's Church of England rather than the Pope's Catholic Church. Over the course of Mary's reign, many conspiracy plots were designed to get Elizabeth onto the throne. None of them succeeded, but they did almost manage to get her killed.

In 1554, Thomas Wyatt attempted a rebellion following the announcement that Mary would marry the Spanish king Philip. The queen's reprisal was brutal and swift, executing not only the ringleaders, but Jane Grey as well. Elizabeth claimed ignorance, a trick she managed to successfully repeat a year later after another attempted rebellion in 1555, but her sister's patience was wearing thin and Elizabeth was placed in the Tower of London, with some Catholic supporters clamouring for her execution.

> "The queen's reprisal was brutal and swift, executing not only the ringleaders, but also Jane Grey"

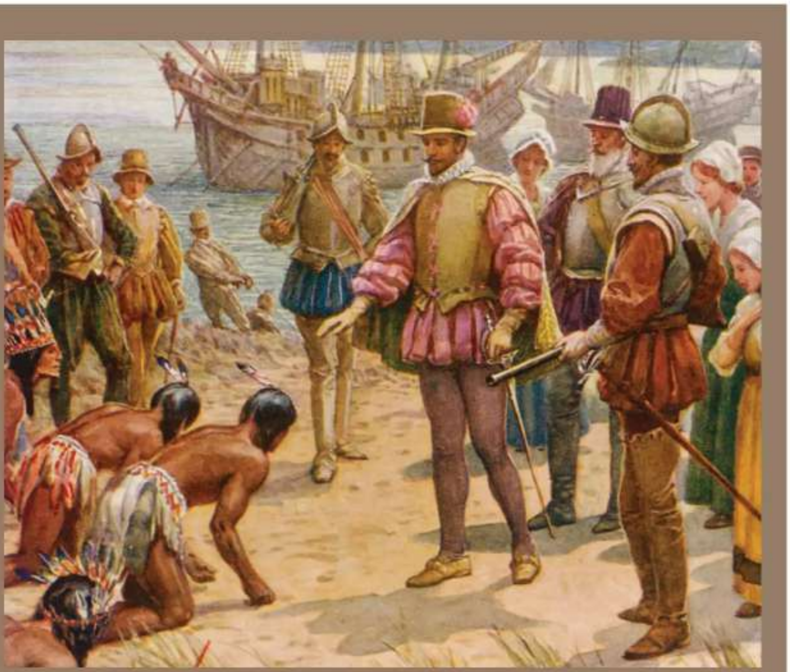
Elizabeth's future prospects were looking anything but golden, and the next few months saw her walking a political tightrope. Mary, desperate to provide her husband and her country with a Catholic heir to end the uncertainty surrounding the throne, announced that she was pregnant, but by 1558, it became clear that Mary's condition was not pregnancy, but a devastating illness. Her health broke quickly, and she died on 17 November of that year after begging Elizabeth to keep England Catholic once she took the throne. Her wishes would not be fulfilled.

Elizabeth's coronation was a stunning balancing act. With countless eyes waiting for any hint of an overtly Protestant or Catholic gestures, Elizabeth managed to confound them all. Instead, the emphasis was elsewhere: Elizabeth's intention to restore England to a state of prosperity. The new queen knew that if she was to have any chance of surviving her early years she would need trusted and astute advisors, and chose William Cecil and Robert Dudley. Cecil had worked for Edward, survived the reign of Mary and was fiercely loyal to Elizabeth. In contrast, Dudley's appointment and favour with the queen had nothing to do with his abilities as a politician. He had known Elizabeth since childhood and her affection for him had only grown stronger, and rumours abounded that she spent the nights as well as the days with him.

Cecil disapproved of Dudley and agreed with the majority of Parliament that Elizabeth should marry as soon as possible. The eyes of France and Spain were fixed on England and it made sense for the queen to create a marriage alliance with one of these major powers for her and the country's safety. King Philip II made no secret of his desire to marry Elizabeth, but she had no interest in marrying Mary's former husband. Henry of Anjou was suggested as a match, but he was still a child. Elizabeth spoke instead of being married to her nation, but scandal struck when Dudley's wife Amy died suddenly after apparently falling down the stairs in 1560. It was rumoured that Dudley had committed the deed for his queen, and Elizabeth was forced to expel him from her court.

In 1561, Elizabeth's cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, returned to Scotland from France. For many Catholics, Mary was the true successor and she did little to downplay those clamouring for a Catholic monarch. Her arrival was perfectly timed, as Elizabeth was on the verge of death due to smallpox. However, she recovered and, with the scandal over Dudley dissipating, Elizabeth chose him to be Lord Protector, bringing him back into her court, before shocking everyone by suggesting a marriage between him and Mary. This was Elizabeth showing her political astuteness; she knew well that Scotland with a Catholic heir would

> "The Queen rallied troops by declaring that she would fight by their side to repel anyone who dare set foot on their land"



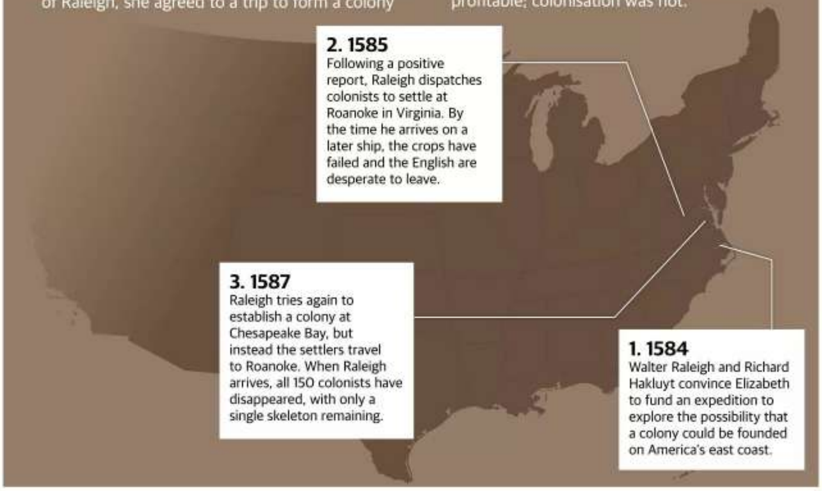
Did Elizabeth have a genuine thirst for new worlds?

Although the expansion of trade into India occurred during Elizabeth's reign, in terms of exploration she is best remembered for England's attempt to colonise North America. The Spanish and Portuguese had already laid claim to much of South America, establishing lucrative trade routes, but North America was relatively unexplored. Elizabeth was reluctant to fund exploratory voyages for much the same reasons that she was reluctant to fund wars: they were expensive and risky. However, she could be won around with the promise of riches from one of her favourites and, when sailor Davy Ingram returned to England with alluring tales of riches and simple inhabitants, geographer Richard Hakluyt began plotting a serious expedition to be led by Walter Raleigh.

With the promise of fortune and the flattery of Raleigh, she agreed to a trip to form a colony named after her: Virginia. The first party launched, and Raleigh would follow. When the nobleman arrived, he saw the settlement had failed. The English were desperate to leave. Raleigh's second attempt was intended for Chesapeake Bay, but the first group, led by John White, returned to Roanoke. Raleigh arrived with his second group and found no trace of survivors. Elizabeth was disappointed that these costly ventures yielded no results. There was one purpose to these expeditions, as de Lisle explains very simply: "Making money."

Verdict

The Elizabethan era's reputation for exploration is largely due to the fact that there was money to be made from it. Piratical ventures were profitable; colonisation was not.



2. 1585
Following a positive report, Raleigh dispatches colonists to settle at Roanoke in Virginia. By the time he arrives on a later ship, the crops have failed and the English are desperate to leave.

3. 1587
Raleigh tries again to establish a colony at Chesapeake Bay, but instead the settlers travel to Roanoke. When Raleigh arrives, all 150 colonists have disappeared, with only a single skeleton remaining.

1. 1584
Walter Raleigh and Richard Hakluyt convince Elizabeth to fund an expedition to explore the possibility that a colony could be founded on America's east coast.

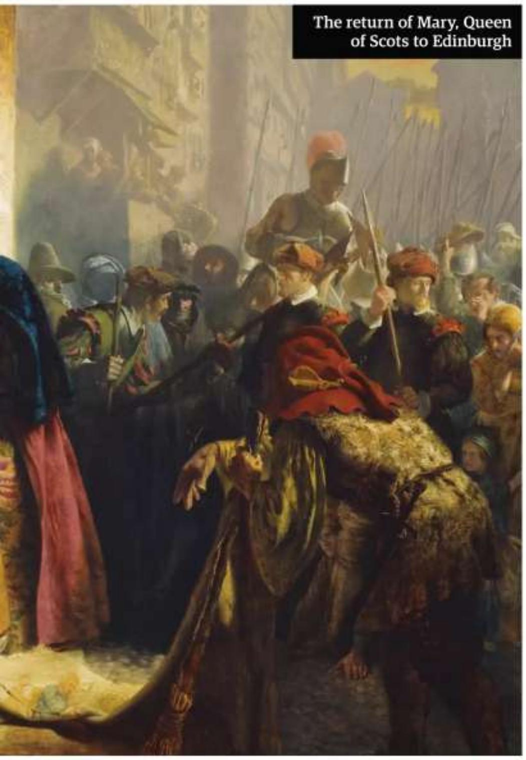
have too much power, but an heir produced by her favourite and Mary, Queen of Scots could potentially unite the two countries. However, Dudley refused and Mary had no interest in marrying her cousin's paramour.

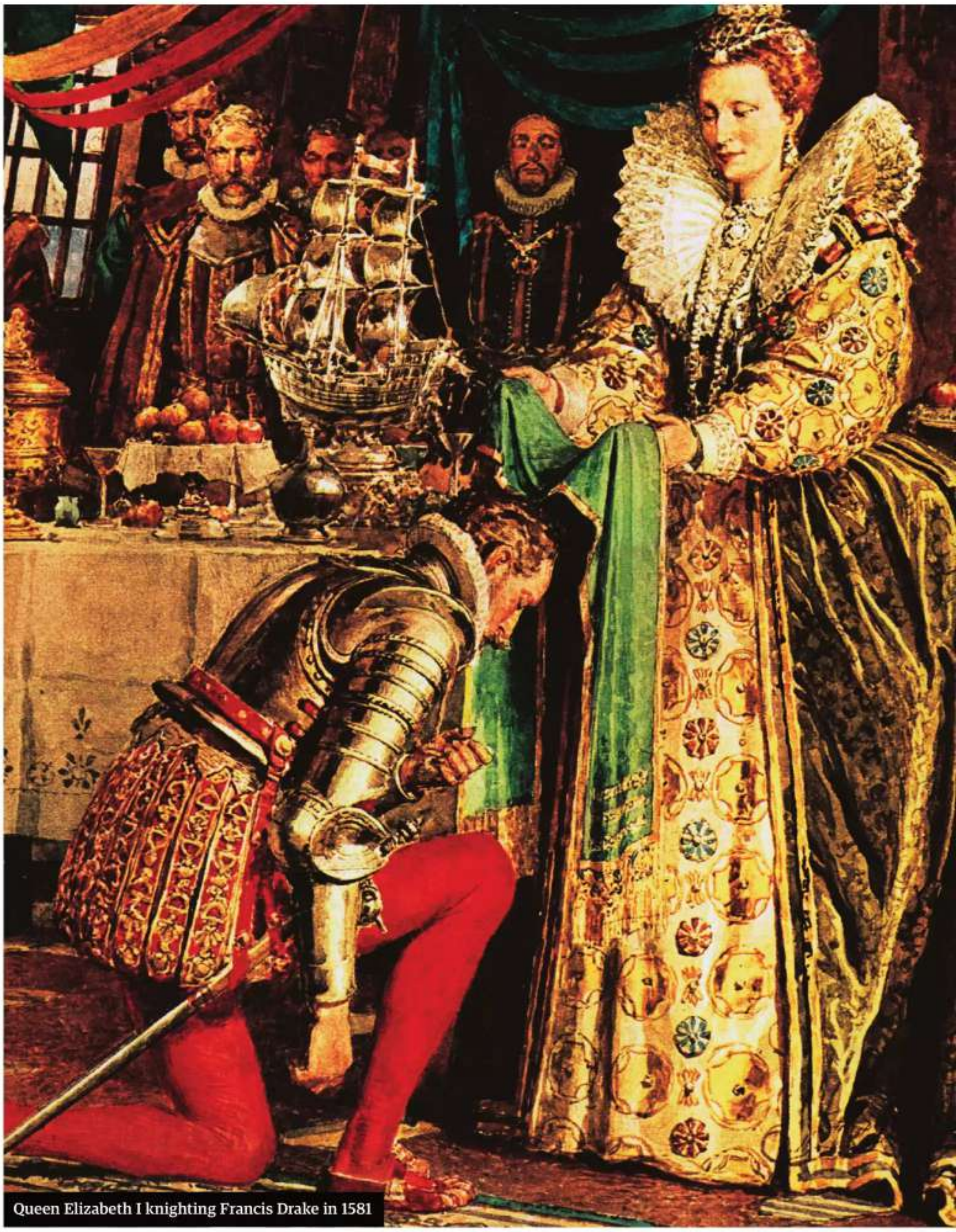
Instead, Mary married for love, choosing Lord Henry Darnley. Seeing this may have prompted Elizabeth to renew her interest in Dudley, which greatly upset the council, in particular the ambitious Lord Norfolk. When the tension between Norfolk and Dudley grew too great, Elizabeth understood that she needed to assert her authority. "I will have here but one mistress and no master," she told Dudley. It was both a political statement and a personal one. The lack of a husband and heir was only made worse in 1566 when Mary gave birth to a son, James, but she was desperately unhappy. Darnley was a violent, drunken husband: many believed he brutally murdered her secret lover, David Rizzio. Darnley would meet his own nasty end a year later, when he was found strangled in the garden of a house. Mary quickly married the Earl of Bothwell, the man who had allegedly murdered Darnley, and Scottish forces rose against her. Imprisoned and forced to abdicate, she eventually fled to England. Elizabeth agreed to give Mary shelter, but her arrival in the north had given Catholics a figurehead and rebellion brewed.

The northern Earls suggested that Norfolk should marry Mary: soon, the Northern Rebellion had begun. As the rebel forces marched south, Elizabeth moved Mary to Coventry and mustered troops of her own. The southern Earls rallied to her cause, which stunned the rebel forces, who began to retreat. Elizabeth's victory was quick and decisive, with 700 men being executed in a brutal display of power. Norfolk was placed under arrest, but a lack of concrete evidence postponed his execution, until he was implicated in the Ridolfi plot, which aimed to make Spain's Philip II king. Elizabeth ordered and rescinded Norfolk's execution three times - a prime example of how indecisive she could be at times - before finally deciding that he simply had to die.

If Elizabeth's position at home appeared shaky it was positively stable compared to how she was viewed abroad. The Pope decreed that anyone who murdered the heretical English queen would be forgiven, a statement King Philip took to heart. Not wanting to risk open war, Elizabeth found other ways to aggravate her enemies. She quietly patronised the piratical exploits of John Hawkins and later his cousin Francis Drake. In 1577, when he planned to travel to South America to raid Spanish gold, Elizabeth met Drake with Francis Walsingham, one of her ambassadors to France.

The cautious Cecil had to be kept in the dark, but she told Drake explicitly that she supported him: "I would gladly be revenged on the King of Spain for diverse injuries I have received." Having sailed through the Straits of Magellan and captured a Spanish ship carrying up to £200,000 in gold,


The return of Mary, Queen of Scots to Edinburgh


Queen Elizabeth I knighting Francis Drake in 1581

Drake decided to sail across the Pacific, becoming the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe. Elizabeth gloried in his achievement, and when she met the Spanish ambassador in 1581, she pointedly wore a crucifix Drake had given to her from the loot. She dined with Drake on the Golden Hind and knighted him. He had done her proud.

These piratical exploits stood in sharp contrast to the events of 1572. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris - the assassination of a number of French Calvinist Protestants - shocked England and the ambassador Sir Francis Walsingham was forced to take refuge. Elizabeth brought him back to London to become her spymaster, where he advised that Mary, Queen of Scots was a real danger. The uprising was not only a shocking scene for English Protestants; it was also a sign that the Protestant Netherlands and their booming wool trade would soon be in danger.

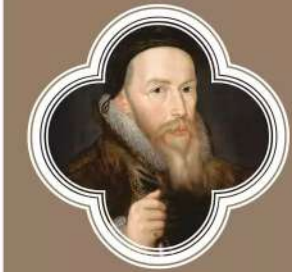
When William the Silent asked Elizabeth for military assistance, she did not want to be seen to intervene and give Philip of Spain an excuse to attack. Walsingham counselled war, while Cecil continued to preach marriage. So Elizabeth entertained the idea of marrying the Duke of Anjou, roughly ten years after it had first been suggested. Then, he had been an ugly youth and she had been a beautiful queen. Now, she was visibly older and the flattery of the French ambassador and Anjou's letters began to win her over. When they finally met, it appeared that Elizabeth really was in love, but there were genuine concerns over how the English people would react.

"The anxieties Elizabeth expressed to the emissary of Mary, Queen of Scots in 1561, that she too could not marry anyone without triggering unrest in one group or another, only deepened following Mary, Queen of Scots's disastrous marriages to Darnley and then Bothwell - which ended in her overthrow," explains Leanda de Lisle, author of Tudor: The Family Story. "Elizabeth continued to look publicly for a husband to fulfil national expectations that she would provide them with an undisputed heir, and surely she hoped it was not impossible. She was married to her kingdom - a phrase she had learned from Mary Tudor. But while Mary had married, Elizabeth did not because she feared revolt by those who disapproved of her choice."

Although she clearly wanted to marry the man that she had nicknamed her "frog," the English people found the idea of their Virgin Queen marrying a French Catholic absolutely repulsive. When a pamphlet appeared that condemned the union, Elizabeth decreed that both the author and his printer should have their right hands cut off. Her Privy Council was split in half, with the jealous Robert Dudley vehemently opposed. Elizabeth was heartbroken, but she agreed to abstain. She gave Anjou £10,000 to continue his war against Philip in the Netherlands, but did not see him again. He tried to take power for himself but failed and died a year later. When William the Silent was assassinated in his own house in 1584

Main players of

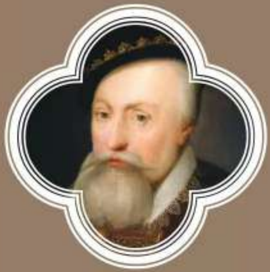
Council and Government



William Cecil

1520-98

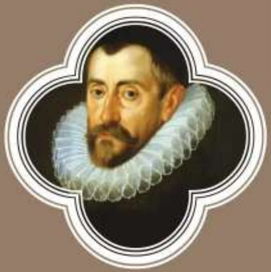
A canny political operator who understood the difficulties that were ahead, Cecil was Elizabeth's first appointment and was fiercely loyal, dedicating his life to helping her. Although he believed she should marry, Elizabeth knew Cecil was invaluable and pressured him into staying on, even when he was sickly and deaf.



Robert Dudley

1532-88

Dudley had known Elizabeth since childhood, and was her first love. His appointment to court had more to do with her affection for him than any outstanding abilities as a politician, however, and his presence at court proved to be a continual source of rumour and scandal. Their relationship was rocky and driven by passion.

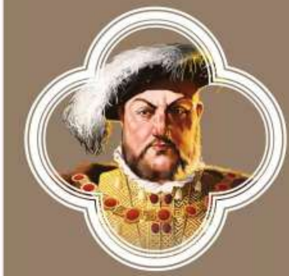


Francis Walsingham

1532-90

The Protestant Walsingham was allowed to return to England after Mary's death, and quickly became one of Elizabeth's most invaluable assets. A brilliant spymaster and politician, he understood the threat that Mary, Queen of Scots posed, and engineered her downfall. He also supported Drake and Raleigh's explorations.

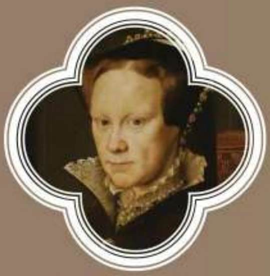
Family



Henry VIII

1491-1547

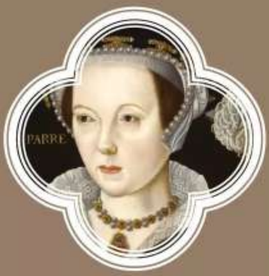
Henry was desperate for a boy to carry on his family name, and was disappointed when Anne Boleyn gave him Elizabeth. He was absent for much of her childhood, but was kept informed of her progress nonetheless. When he finally met his daughter he was very impressed, so much so that he reinstated her and Mary into his legacy.



Mary Tudor

1516-58

Despite their differences, Mary, Elizabeth and their brother Edward had a relatively close relationship as children. When she became Queen, Mary was desperate for Elizabeth to convert and unable to understand why she wouldn't. She came close to executing her sister, but abstained, finally requesting that she keep England Catholic.



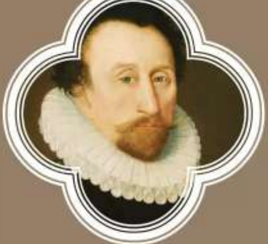
Catherine Parr

1512-48

Catherine and Elizabeth became close during her marriage to Henry, and Elizabeth lived with Catherine for some time after his death. However, Catherine's husband Thomas Seymour was more interested in their young charge than his wife, and she assisted in his attempts at seduction, dying soon after they failed.

the golden age

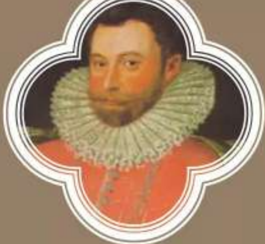
Explorers



John Hawkins

1532-95

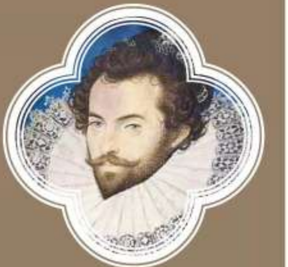
Hawkins may have possessed a coat of arms, but he first managed to find favour with the Queen as a pirate. With Elizabeth's implicit permission, he planned and executed a series of daring raids on Spanish ports in the West Indies, but after a disastrous third voyage he returned to England, where he began working for the Queen in a more direct capacity.



Francis Drake

1540-96

Having sailed on his cousin John Hawkins' expeditions, Francis Drake had no love for the Spanish. He was willing to circumnavigate the globe in order to rob them of their riches and deliver them to Elizabeth, who was delighted with his exploits, and continued to commission him to undertake raids on Spanish ports.

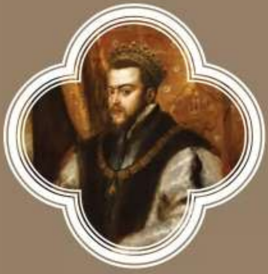


Walter Raleigh

1554-1618

Raleigh gained Elizabeth's favour at court and quickly set his sights on expanding her empire. He decided he would establish Britain's first colony in North America, and told the Queen it would be named after her: Virginia. To his great dismay, the colony at Roanoke failed. He is often falsely credited with bringing potatoes and tobacco to England.

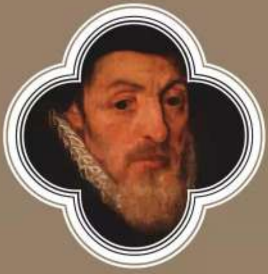
Enemies



King Philip II

1527-1598

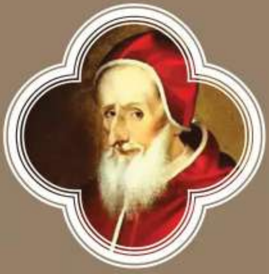
The main religious threat to Elizabeth for the majority of her realm came from the King of Spain. The Pope might have given the bull that deposed Elizabeth but the fiercely Catholic Philip was the man with the army that could enforce it. He had attempted to woo the princess while still married to her sister but, once rebuffed, relentlessly opposed her.



John Whitgift

1530-1604

As the issue of religious tolerance became increasingly difficult to manage, Elizabeth hand-picked her old chaplain for the role of Archbishop of Canterbury. He was a stubborn man, as evidenced by his refusal to leave England during Queen Mary's reign. Like Elizabeth, he was a Conformist and ruthlessly punished those who publicly strayed from the 'right' path.



Pope Pius V

1504-72

As the head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Pius V saw Elizabeth's status of Queen of England and head of its church not only as an affront to his religion, but as an act of heresy. He went as far as to issue a Papal Bull on 27 April 1570, which declared that her subjects no longer owed her any kind of allegiance.

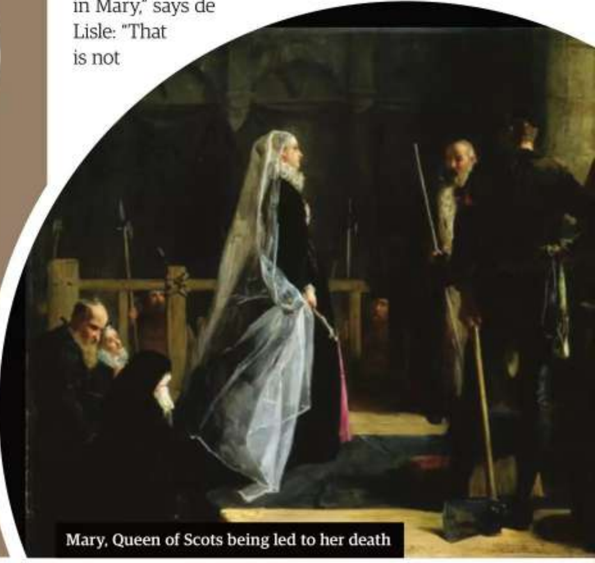
> "She bitterly resented the circumstances of Mary's execution"

by a Catholic fanatic, it was clear that military intervention could not be put off any longer and so in 1585, to the relief of her impatient councillors, she agreed to send a small force of men. Dudley took command in the Netherlands but proved to be incompetent, losing territory to Philip's general, the Duke of Parma. Mary was now more dangerous than ever. Elizabeth ordered her imprisonment at the urging of Francis Walsingham, who had no intention of allowing her to live much longer. He arranged for a servant, one of his own spies, to suggest that Mary smuggle letters in beer barrels, allowing Walsingham to read everything. When Thomas Babingdon wrote to Mary with a plan to assassinate Elizabeth and give her the crown Mary wrote back with her approval; the spymaster's trap had worked perfectly, and he had ensnared his unwitting prey.

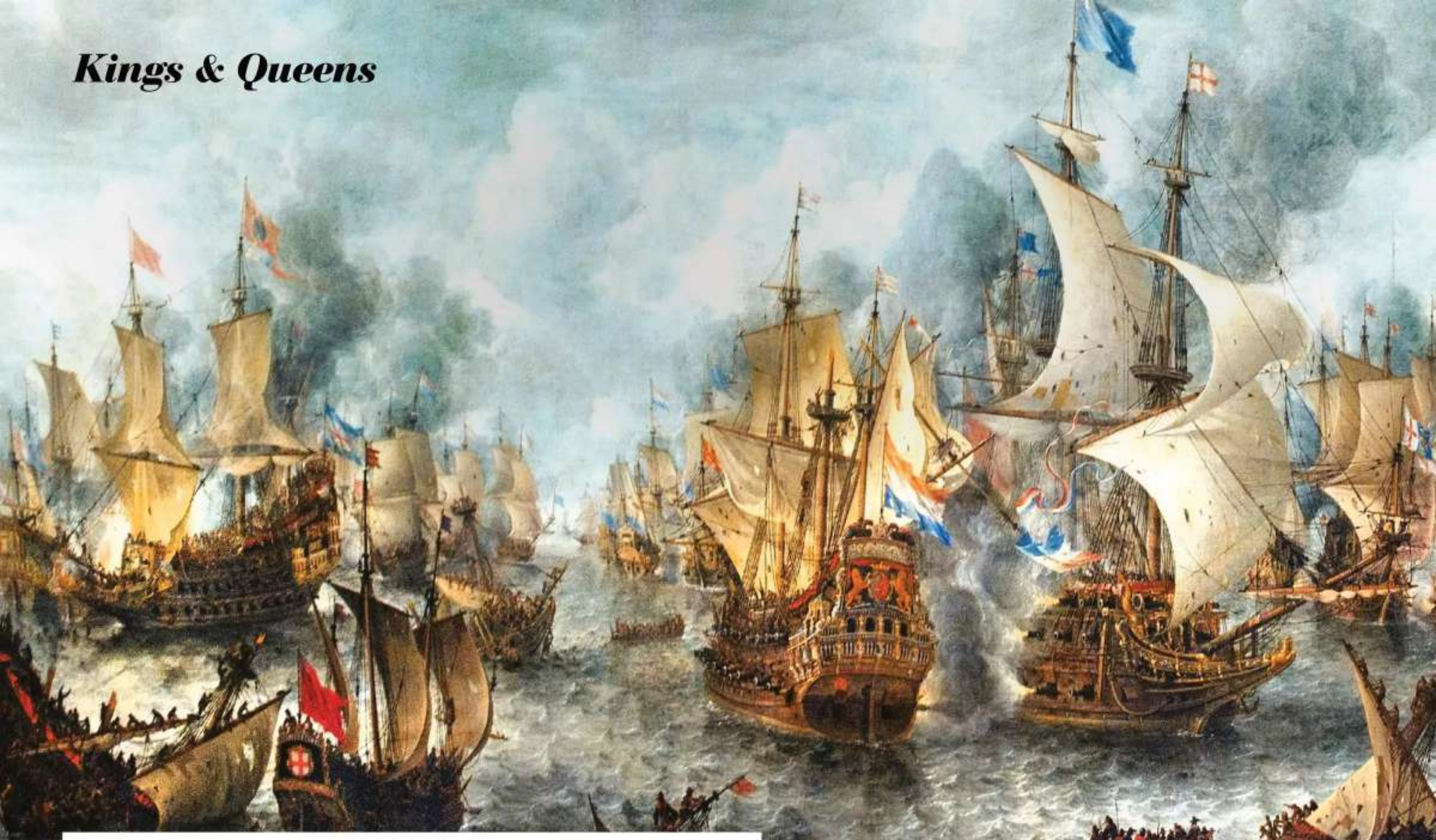
Walsingham leapt into action and ordered the conspirators' execution. Elizabeth had always been reluctant to execute her cousin, but she agreed she would have to stand trial. It was no surprise when the court decided that Mary should be put to death. Elizabeth grieved for Mary, or at least lamented her death. The man who had delivered the warrant was imprisoned and stripped of his title.

Elizabeth was always reluctant to sign a death warrant - or at least she was reluctant to be seen to sign it. We can't know how much of Elizabeth's grief was genuine, but she bitterly resented the circumstances of Mary's execution.

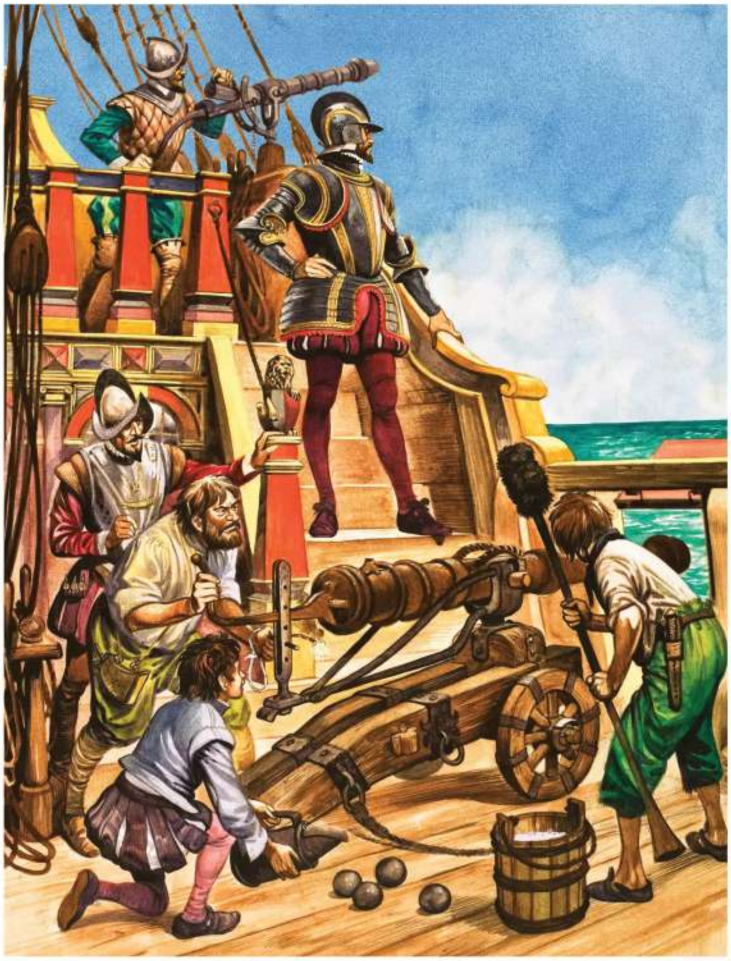
"Elizabeth was reluctant to be seen to execute first the senior nobleman in England, in Norfolk, and then a fellow queen, in Mary," says de Lisle: "That is not



Mary, Queen of Scots being led to her death



The Spanish Armada is put into disarray by English fireships on 8 August 1588



The gun-crew on an Elizabethan ship - she funded the journeys of numerous privateers

to say she regretted their deaths. She would have preferred to have Mary murdered, for example, as she made very clear.

It is also notable that she was quite ruthless in ordering the deaths of traitors of humble birth - the 900 or so executed after the Northern Rebellion testifies to that. This was three times the numbers Henry VIII had executed after the far more serious Pilgrimage of Grace, and ten times the numbers Mary executed after Wyatt's revolt."

Mary's execution provided Philip II with the reason he needed to declare war and his Spanish Armada co-ordinated with the Duke of Parma's forces in the Netherlands, with the two forces meeting before sailing on England.

They launched on 12 July 1588, their forces possessing more than twice the number of English ships, but the English ships did have some advantages; they were smaller, faster, and designed to carry guns rather than men. The English ships could outmanoeuvre the Spanish fleet in open water and began to engage them in small skirmishes. It was at this point that Elizabeth rode out to meet her troops. With the threat of a Catholic force at their doorstep, the queen rallied the spirit

"The queen rallied the spirit of the English troops by declaring that she would fight by their side"

of the English troops by declaring that she would fight by their side to repel anyone who dared to set foot on their land.

This grandstanding was impressive and may have gone down in history's annals but was ultimately unnecessary. The Spanish Armada failed and Elizabeth's victory was the seal on her status. 'The Golden Age' had begun, where art and literature flowered. With England a visibly powerful state, the aristocracy began to patronise the arts with great abandon.

The famous playwrights of the age enjoyed patronage, albeit with some caveats. When Shakespeare wrote Richard II he was encouraged to remove a scene suggesting the ageing monarch should step aside. "Elizabeth did not care for plays," confirms de Lisle: "All too often they were used to lecture her on this or that."

Her crown may have been safe for now, but she received devastating blows with the deaths of two of her most trusted advisors, Dudley and Walsingham. Dudley was replaced at court by his handsome stepson, the Earl of Essex, and the young flatterer quickly became her favourite.

"Robert Dudley's death in 1588 signalled the passing of the old order, but Elizabeth still hoped she could continue ruling according to her motto, 'Semper Eadem' ('Always the same')" explains de Lisle. "As the years began to pass and her servants died she either did not replace them or find a near-equivalent to the servant she had lost." It's a sign of how much she leaned on her old guard that she continued to place her trust in William

Did England become a nation to be feared?

Elizabeth's foreign policy was decidedly more cautious than expansive. She was desperate to avoid conflict because it was expensive and the outcome always uncertain. However, she had a spirit that could easily be won over by the idea of adventure. She delighted in the expeditions of John Hawkins and Francis Drake, which could be seen to be aggravating the King of Spain without actually declaring open conflict. In 1562, she agreed to a military expedition in Calais, which was crushed by Catherine de' Medici's forces, and this failure would influence her military decisions for the rest of her reign.

"There was no glory in it for Elizabeth as there was for a male monarch," Leanda de Lisle reveals. "She understood the truth of the adage of Mary of Hungary: that war made it impossible for a woman to rule effectively, 'all she can do is shoulder responsibility for mistakes committed by others.'"

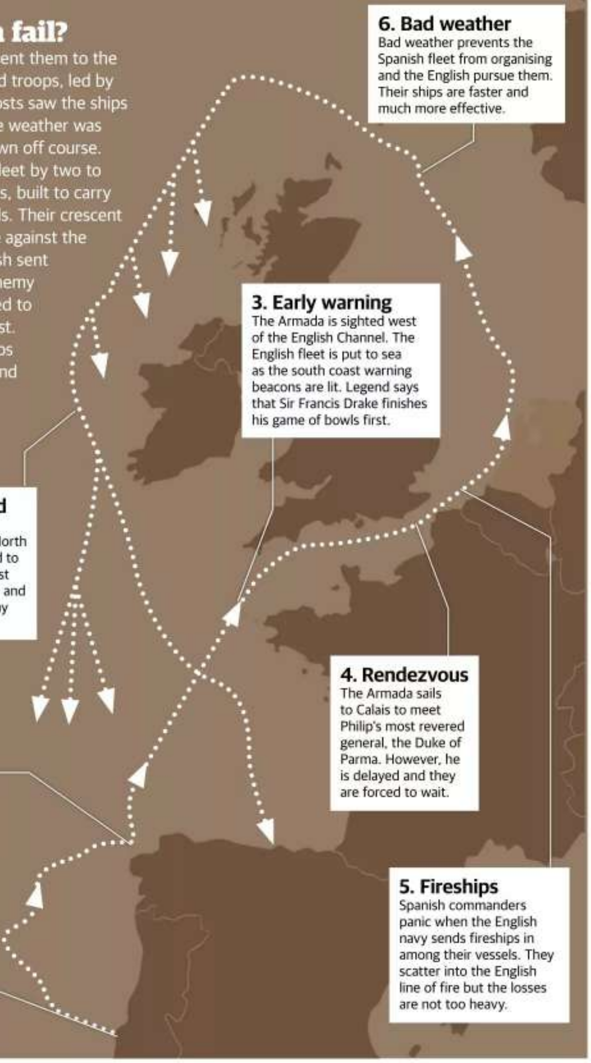
Her ally and enemy lines were drawn by religion. France and Spain were clearly opposed to England on these grounds, which is why her courtiers were so anxious that Elizabeth marry an eligible man from either country. Even after the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, Elizabeth was reluctant to be drawn into open war. The piecemeal way in which she gave the Dutch her assistance shows her reluctance to engage in open conflict of any kind, first offering financial support to the Dutch troops, then the Duke of Anjou, before finally agreeing to send an English force when there was no other option. Her cautious attitude towards foreign policy doubtless saved the kingdom a lot of money. However, it was taken out of her hands when the Spanish Armada sailed on England."

Verdict

The victory against the Armada was a shining moment but for the most part Elizabeth kept out of foreign conflict. When she didn't, she regularly suffered defeats.

Why did the Armada fail?

King Philip amassed his Armada and sent them to the Netherlands to join up with his ground troops, led by the Duke of Parma. The English outposts saw the ships coming and alerted the admiralty. The weather was against the Spanish, as they were blown off course. While they outnumbered the British fleet by two to one, the Spanish ships were enormous, built to carry troops that could board enemy vessels. Their crescent formation was famous, but it did little against the smaller English ships. When the English sent fireships into the Spanish fleet, the enemy panicked and scattered. They managed to regroup for one confrontation, and lost. The Spanish retreated, with many ships crashing on the rocks of the English and Irish coastline.



1. Armada sets sail
On 28 May 1588, Philip is ready to begin his invasion of England. He gathers his Armada and they sail from Lisbon.

2. Delays
Severe weather forces Philip to dock in Coruna to make repairs to his fleet. He is delayed by more than a month.

3. Early warning
The Armada is sighted west of the English Channel. The English fleet is put to sea as the south coast warning beacons are lit. Legend says that Sir Francis Drake finishes his game of bowls first.

4. Rendezvous
The Armada sails to Calais to meet Philip's most revered general, the Duke of Parma. However, he is delayed and they are forced to wait.

5. Fireships
Spanish commanders panic when the English navy sends fireships in among their vessels. They scatter into the English line of fire but the losses are not too heavy.

6. Bad weather
Bad weather prevents the Spanish fleet from organising and the English pursue them. Their ships are faster and much more effective.

7. Ships wrecked
The weather blows the Spanish fleet into the North Sea and they are forced to retreat up England's east coast, beyond Scotland and down past Ireland. Many ships are wrecked.

Cecil, even though he was almost entirely deaf and increasingly ill. It was only when he died in 1598 that Elizabeth finally agreed to appoint Robert Cecil to his father's old post. When it became known that the Spanish were attempting to rebuild their fleet, Essex led a fleet on Cadiz and decimated their forces in port. The success gave Essex fame, something Elizabeth was taken aback by. She tried to curb him, aware that her standing among the people was her greatest asset, but Essex continued to promote his own celebrity. She became more and more frustrated with his outrageous behaviour at court, which came to a dramatic head when he half-drew his sword on her in a fit of pique.

The arts and literature may have been flourishing, but those who subscribe to this being a golden age in England's history often forget that even after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, other uprisings, such as the 1598 Irish rebellion, occurred. The country had long been a problem for Tudor England, which had attempted to impose English values and had seen the Irish as tenants on English territory. Now, with a Spanish-backed uprising, Elizabeth needed to take decisive action.

She sent her army at the start of 1599, led by Essex, who was looking to prove himself once more. He was a disaster. Rather than confronting Tyrone on the battlefield, he met him in secret and returned to England having made a treaty without the queen's authority.

When Essex thought Cecil was plotting against him, he rushed to plead his case. Assuming he was still the queen's favourite, he burst into her bedchamber while she was preparing for the day. He had seen Elizabeth without her make-up and regal dressing; not as a queen but as an old woman. She could not afford to be seen like this. The queen dismissed him before summoning him later to confront him with his failures and strip him of power. Rather than accepting his fate, Essex attempted rebellion. He assumed Londoners would back the popular war hero, but Elizabeth proclaimed him a traitor and sent her troops to meet him. The rebellion was a failure and Essex was executed as a traitor.

Although the later years of Elizabeth's reign were far from golden, she could still rally her people when needed. The war in Ireland was expensive and unsuccessful, while overcrowding and failed harvests caused agitation. When Parliament publicly condemned her for granting monopolies to her favourite courtiers, which had led to price-fixing, Elizabeth was forced to address them in 1601. She agreed to put a stop to the monopolies and she reaffirmed her love for England. She won over Parliament, there was a good harvest, and a truce was reached in Ireland and Spain. "Elizabeth, old and ill, did lose some of her former grip, but never entirely," states de Lisle. "She had followed Mary I's example in wooing the common people from the beginning of her reign, and they continued to support her."

Having seen off another uprising, the 50-year-old monarch's health was failing and after an all-too-rare period of good health, Elizabeth grew sickly. She was desperately frustrated by Cecil's growing

> "She wooed her people with smiles, words of love and great showmanship, and so won their hearts"

Did peace reign in England?

The early years of Elizabeth's reign were extremely unstable. The Catholics regarded her as a heretical bastard without a just claim to the throne, and she had to prove to her people that she was capable of ruling alone. Conspiracies at home and abroad plotted to remove her from the throne, and when Mary, Queen of Scots took refuge in England, her Catholic enemies finally had someone to rally around. 1569 saw her face the first real uprising with the Northern Rebellion. The Earls of Westmorland and Northumberland rallied the rebel aristocracy around them, but they were not prepared for the force of her reprisal.

In her later years she saw rebellion rear its head again as Essex overstepped his bounds. With famine and overcrowding of cities, Elizabeth's position became unstable once again. "Imagine if Elizabeth had died in October 1562 when she had smallpox," asks de Lisle: "Elizabeth had been on the throne almost four years: only a year short of her sister's reign. If she died, as many feared she would, how would her reign have been remembered? Elizabeth's religious settlement was not viewed as settled by anyone save the Queen. One of her own bishops called it 'a leaden mediocrity'. In military matters, while Mary I's loss of Calais is still remembered, Elizabeth's failed efforts to recover Calais by taking Le Havre and using it as a bargaining tool are completely forgotten. The campaign had ended that August 1562, with the huge loss of 2,000 men."

Verdict

Elizabeth's reign featured numerous rebellions and uprisings, but this was not unusual for a Tudor monarch, and given the religious uncertainty in the country at the time, she handled the uprisings quickly and decisively.

Rebellions against Elizabeth

When Elizabeth ascended to the throne she immediately faced the threat of rebellion from the Catholic nobility, who resented the fact that she was turning away from the changes made by her sister Mary. The first great uprising came in 1569, when the northern noblemen took advantage of the return of Mary, Queen of Scots to England, and attempted to overthrow her. The Duke of Norfolk, unhappy with being sidelined by the Earl of Dudley, entertained a marriage plot with Mary, while the northern Earls mounted rebellion. It was summarily crushed and hundreds were executed.

The Earl of Essex, Elizabeth's great favourite, attempted a rebellion in 1601 after he was stripped of his powers in an attempt to gain power. In line with his apparently oversized ego, he overestimated his personal popularity, the people's dissatisfaction with their monarch and his Queen's capacity for forgiveness for one of her former favourites. When Elizabeth was confronted with open defiance she rarely hesitated to crush it. She understood when to be brutal and when to charm. With the rebellions against her she was unforgiving and generally unsparing, meting out punishments swiftly and unsparingly to rebels and traitors.

Elizabeth's golden moments

1550
1555
1560
1565
1570
1575
1580
1585
1590
1595
1600
1605

1. 1559
Elizabeth is crowned Queen of England. Everyone watches to see if she displays a Protestant leaning but the ceremony is ambiguous.

2. 1566
Elizabeth announces to a Parliament desperate to see her choose a husband that she is married to England.

3. 1569
The Northern Rebellion is crushed. Elizabeth brutally punishes those responsible and sends a shocking reminder to anyone who would challenge her.

4. 1577
Francis Drake circumnavigates the globe and returns with boats filled with riches stolen from the King of Spain.

5. 1587
Elizabeth is forced to execute Mary, Queen of Scots, which is the final straw for Catholic Spain.

6. 1588
The Spanish Armada sails for England, but is decisively defeated. Elizabeth delivers her famous Tilbury speech from horseback, which becomes legend.

7. 1601
Following famine and controversy over her granting monopolies to her favourites, Elizabeth gives her 'Golden Speech' to a furious Parliament and wins them over.

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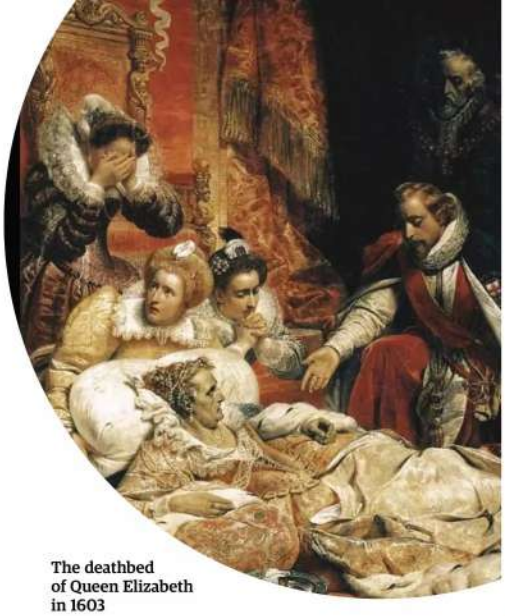


The deathbed of Queen Elizabeth in 1603

power over her and refused to go to bed as she realised that the end was coming soon. Elizabeth finally died on 23 March 1603. Although she had struggled to change with the times in the face of younger, ambitious advisors, she had been a formidable political operator. She had still shown the cunning and cleverness to understand her situation, and had never lost the image of a queen loved by her people.

"That image was not created for her," explains de Lisle. "Elizabeth never forgot the events of 1553 when the ordinary people had backed the Tudor sisters, while the political elite had supported Jane Grey. Nor did she forget how in 1554, Mary had made a speech at the Guildhall that roused London in her defence against the Wyatt rebellion. Mary had spoken of her marriage to her kingdom, describing her coronation ring as a wedding band, and her love of her subjects as that of a mother for her children. These were the phrases and motifs Elizabeth would use repeatedly and would become absolutely central to her reign.

In addition, Elizabeth also had an instinct for the crowd's demands. Even her enemies would admit she had 'the power of enchantment'. She wooed her people with smiles, words of love and great showmanship, and so won their hearts. Elizabeth's people would never forget her. When she died and James I become king, people hugely missed the Tudor theatre of reciprocal love, of which Elizabeth had been the last and brightest star."

Elizabeth's reign was not the golden age that legend so often depicts; she faced serious uprisings, both internal and external, during her reign. She was capable of heartlessness and ruthlessness, and could be indecisive and impetuous. During the course of her rule, England saw famine, rebellion and war. However, there's no mistaking her dedication to her country and her determination to listen to what the people wanted from her - and then give it to them. She walked a political tightrope for most of her life, and the fact that she died peacefully in her bed as queen was a major triumph in itself. The English people loved her, and she, in turn, loved them. In the hearts and minds of many of her subjects, she was - and will always be - Britain's golden monarch.

1632 – 1654

Christina of Sweden

A queen who laid aside her crown out of religious principles, a cultured adventuress, or just irresponsible?

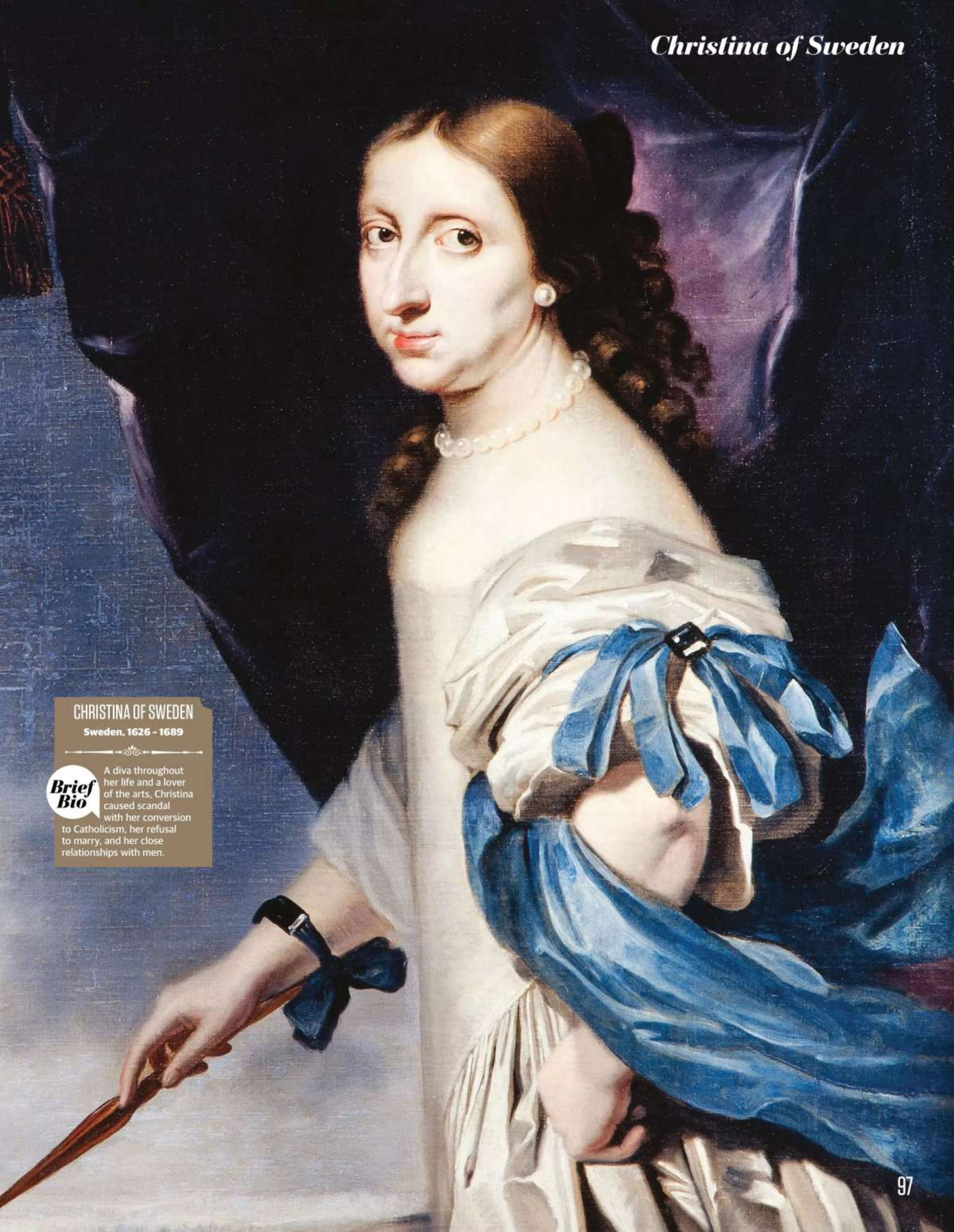
Christina Alexandra of the House of Vasa was a phenomenon without compare, certainly in the 17th century and, arguably, in any age. If we are to begin to understand her we need to know something of her background and origins. The founder of the Vasa dynasty and, indeed, of modern Sweden, was Gustav I. It was Gustav who won independence from Denmark, established the Vasas as a hereditary dynasty, carried through sweeping economic and social reforms, provided Sweden with a modern standing army, and became a major player in Baltic affairs. He also introduced the Reformation to Sweden. At about the same time that Henry VIII in England was breaking ties with Rome and confiscating church property, Gustav was doing the same. But he went even further by embracing Lutheran theology. Gustav was succeeded by his eldest son, Eric, who was mad, provoked a noble rebellion and died in a prison cell. Under Gustav's second son, who now inherited as John III, Sweden experienced a religious see-saw, not unlike that which appeared in England during the reigns of Henry VIII's children. John's wife belonged to the Catholic ruling family of Poland-Lithuania and, under her influence, John, as one contemporary complained, "causeth many superstitions and popish ceremonies to be reared into the church."

The situation became even more difficult when his son, Sigismund, who had already been elected King of Poland-Lithuania, succeeded him in 1592. Sigismund allowed his younger brother Charles to act as regent while he was in Poland, but the two siblings were poles apart over the religious issue and the result was a civil war, which ended with Sigismund being deposed. The king was defeated in battle in 1598 and effectively ceased to rule, though Charles was not proclaimed king until 1604. When he died, seven years later, he handed on to his son a land that was irrevocably Protestant.

The new king, Gustav II, better known to history as Gustavus Adolphus, was a hero in the mould of his grandfather. He became king at the age of 17 and spent most of his life on military campaign. Dubbed by devoted followers as the 'Lion of the North', he had already fought successful campaigns against Denmark and Russia before embarking on his most famous enterprise in 1630.

This was his intervention in the politico-religious conflict known as the Thirty Years' War (1618-48). This most devastating confrontation of France, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, the Dutch Republic and most of the smaller states of Europe was a series of brutal encounters, which had resulted in no conclusion after 22 years. That was when Gustavus brought his well-disciplined army to the aid of the Protestant forces plus France to confront the Habsburg Empire. He won three decisive battles, but was killed at the Battle of Lützen in 1632. Christina, his only child, was now queen of Sweden. She had not yet reached her sixth birthday.

Gustavus had made excellent provision for the peaceful transfer of power to his daughter. He provided her with tutors who were instructed to ensure that she received the same education as a prince. He made parliament swear an oath to support her. He arranged for her to share lessons



CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

Sweden, 1626 - 1689

Brief Bio

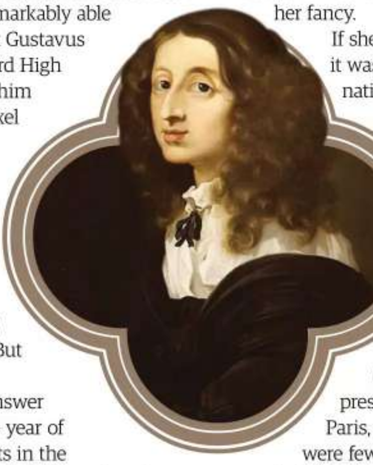
A diva throughout her life and a lover of the arts, Christina caused scandal with her conversion to Catholicism, her refusal to marry, and her close relationships with men.

with her cousin, Charles (four years her senior), who was next in line to the throne, probably with the intention that they would marry. Christina responded enthusiastically to her schooling. She had a lively mind and a voracious appetite for books on many subjects. She mastered the classics and spoke several modern languages. In the work of government she had a remarkably able tutor. The most precious gift Gustavus left his daughter was the Lord High Chancellor who had served him diligently for many years. Axel Oxenstierna was hailed by contemporaries as "an inexhaustible source of fine advice" and even as "the greatest man of the century." Christina did not lack sage counsel as she faced the challenge of being a woman in a man's world. But would she heed it?

The first major political answer to that question came in the year of 1645. The leading combatants in the Thirty Years' War, having fought themselves to a standstill, gathered to solve their differences by negotiation. Oxenstierna, who believed that Sweden would gain from a continuation of the war, sent his son to lead the national delegation. But Christina sent her own agent with instructions to achieve peace at any price. Oxenstierna grumbled that Sweden's gains under the eventual treaty in 1648 would have been greater if he had been allowed to pursue a more robust policy. By this time Christina had replaced Oxenstierna as principal adviser with Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, a man whose talents lay more in enhancing the splendour of monarchy than in administration.

In 1649 the queen caused even greater consternation when she declared formally that she had no intention of marrying and that she was nominating Charles as her heir. She had an emotional repugnance for the physical aspects of married life and had studied Catholic teaching on celibacy, which appealed to her. Christina was now fully in command and her coronation was held in 1650. What kind of a ruler had she decided to be?

The question is not easy to answer and her behaviour certainly puzzled many contemporary observers. She had read histories of previous queens and was a great admirer of Elizabeth I. Yet, unlike the English queen, she did not rely on femininity to achieve her ends. She often wore male attire and even when dressed in clothes appropriate to her sex she declined to fuss over 'fripperies'. At one time a ballet troupe was brought to the court, one of whose tasks was to teach the queen elegant deportment. Oxenstierna proudly remarked of the teenage Christina, "she is not at all like a female." Yet this strong-willed 'tomboy' was also vain and frivolous, spending lavishly on works of art, books, manuscripts, scientific instruments, music, drama and almost anything else that took her fancy.



If she had a vision for her country it was to make Sweden a 'modern' nation, the cultural equal of Holland, France, Italy and other states experiencing the artistic and scientific revolutions of the 17th century. In the fashionable salons of Europe, Sweden was regarded as a cold, backward country inhabited by rude, unsophisticated people.

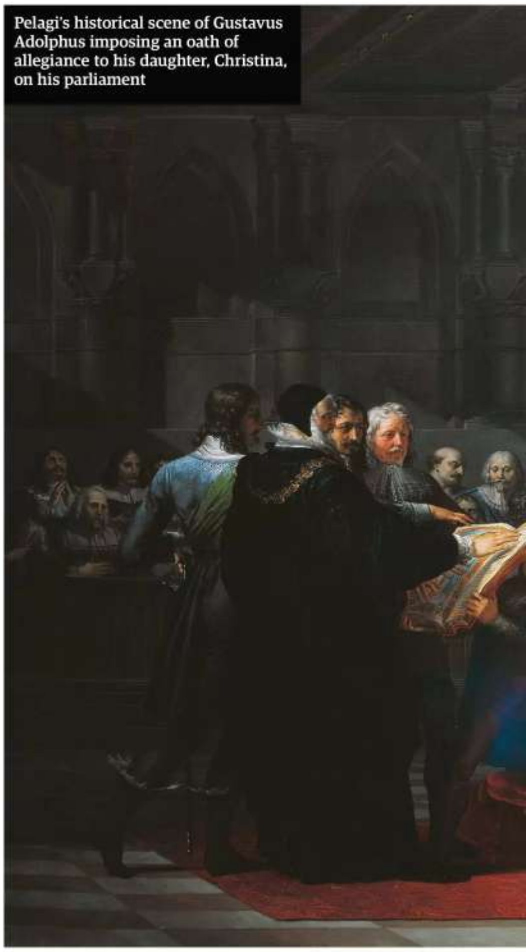
Christina was passionate about presiding over a court rivalling any in Paris, Vienna, London or Rome. There were few scholars in Sweden who could satisfy the young woman's thirst for knowledge. As soon as she had full access to the treasury she sent agents to scour Europe for the latest scholarly treatises and to entice leading thinkers to her court. This was an age of religious debate. Philosophers, theologians, mystics and scientists were freely discussing the existence of God, the nature of the universe and the traditional dogmas of Catholic and Protestant churches.

Thinkers of the stature of René Descartes, Blaise Pascal, Baruch Spinoza, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and, later, Gottfried Leibnitz and Isaac Newton, were among the giants of intellectual debate. Their agenda was wide, embracing Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah), astrology and alchemy in the pursuit of truth. These were the kind of debates that excited Christina. For example, when she heard of an 'underground' manuscript circulating clandestinely, called A Treatise Of The Three Imposters, she had to have a copy. This inflammatory text denounced the teaching of Moses, Mohammad and Jesus - certainly not suitable bedside reading for Christian rulers.

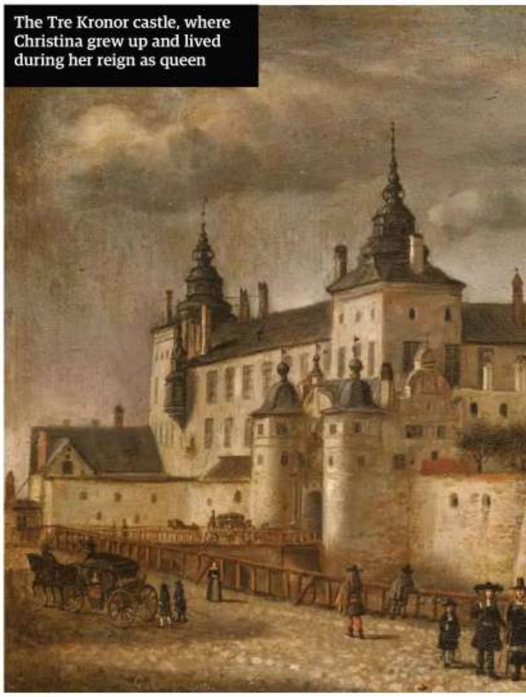
For academics to engage in such speculation was one thing. For reigning monarchs to be influenced by them was quite another. They were not free to believe and practise the religions of their choice - or, at least, not without consequences. By the second half of the 17th century, state religions had

Above: A relaxed portrait of the queen painted by Sebastien Bourdon

"This strong-willed 'tomboy' was also vain and frivolous, spending lavishly on works of art, books and manuscripts"



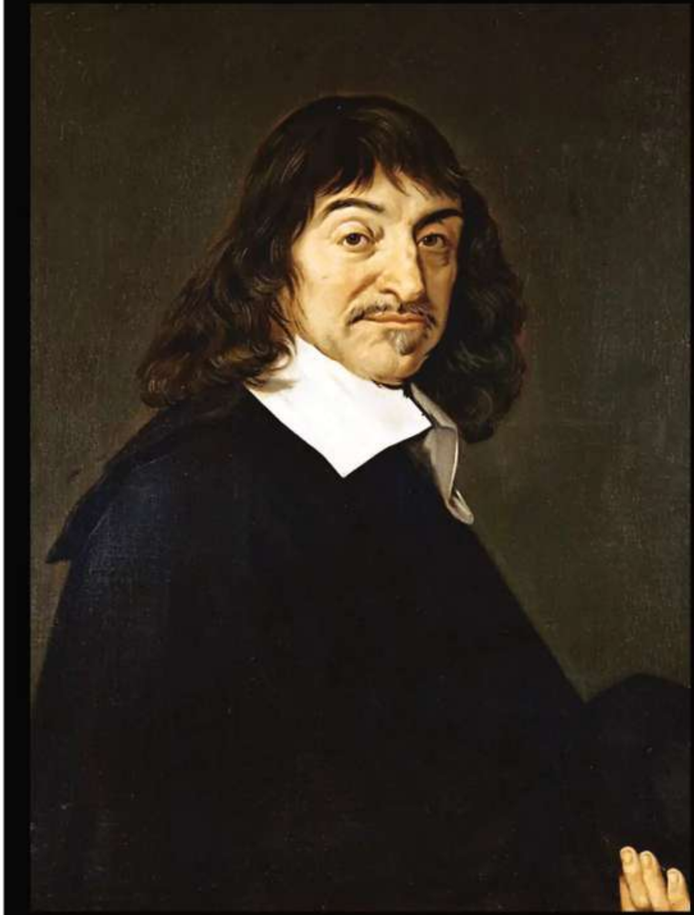
Pelagi's historical scene of Gustavus Adolphus imposing an oath of allegiance to his daughter, Christina, on his parliament



The Tre Kronor castle, where Christina grew up and lived during her reign as queen

Death of a philosopher

A private tutor to Christina and an intellectual celebrity, was Descartes' death due to a terrible cold or an act of murder?



René Descartes (1596-1650) was the first of the great rationalist philosophers of the 17th century. He believed totally in the ability of the human mind to unlock the secrets of the workings of the universe and humanity's place within it. But he went further: "I resolved never to accept anything as true if I did not have evident knowledge of its truth." So much for religious revelation and church dogma.

Descartes was an intellectual celebrity of his time, which meant that Christina was eager to add him to her collection of leading thinkers. However, as someone who wanted to know how to believe in God while being at odds with God's Church, she had a genuine interest in Descartes' philosophy.

Significantly, the queen was particularly interested in his latest book, The Passions Of The Soul, which explored rational control of the human emotions. She invited him to Sweden to establish a scientific academy and to become her private tutor.

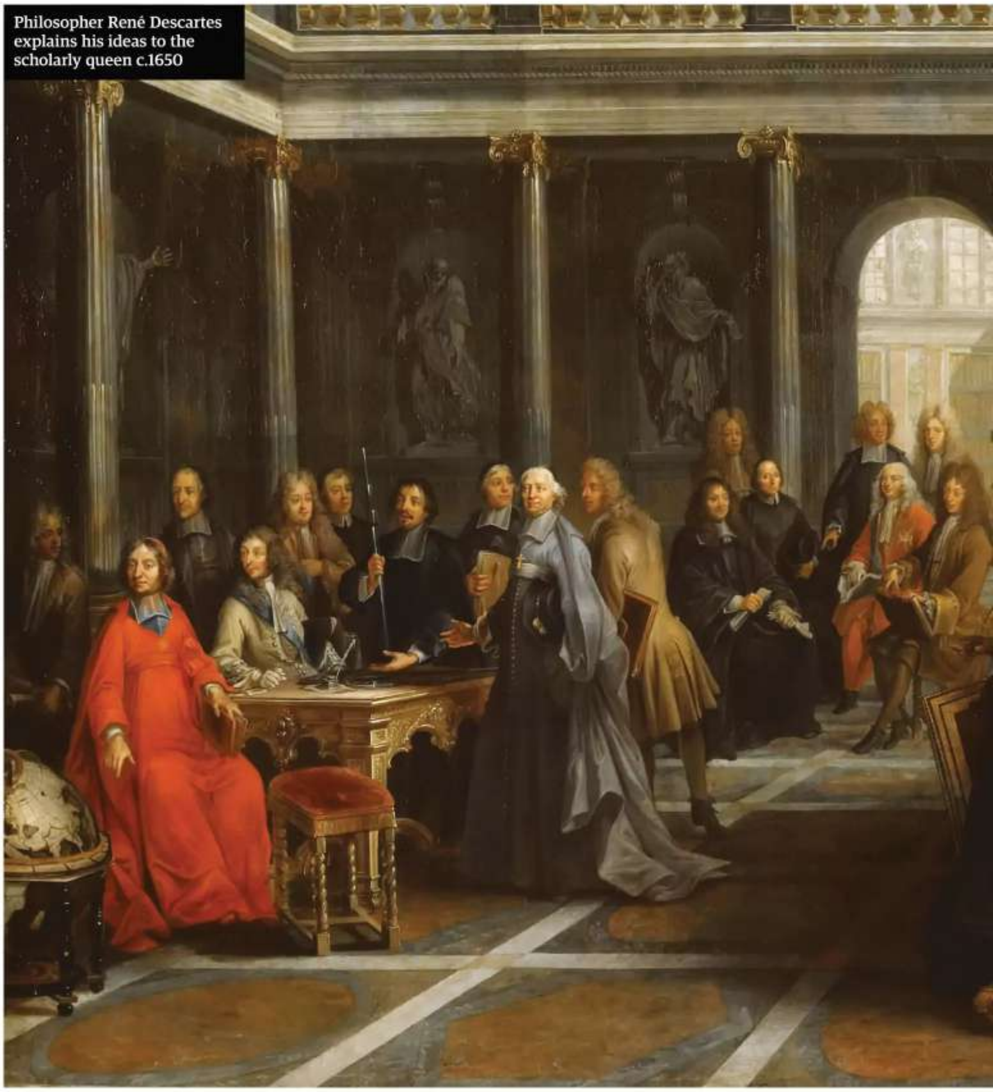
He arrived, reluctantly, in 1649 and lessons with the queen began at the end of the year, in the depth of the northern winter. Christina treated her famous guest with her usual high-handedness, declaring that she only had time to receive him three times a week at 5am. This was a particular hardship for Descartes who was not accustomed to rising from his bed until midday. This and the climate rapidly took their toll on his health.

On 1 February 1650, Descartes caught a cold, which grew rapidly worse. Just two weeks later he died of pneumonia. Or did he? Recent research has suggested that Descartes might have been poisoned by a Catholic priest who feared that the philosopher's influence over the queen might deflect Christina from her Romeward tendencies.

become fixed. Nations were officially Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist or Anglican and rulers were constitutionally bound to support their national churches. For example, when, in 1714 Queen Anne of England died childless, the crown passed to her nearest Protestant heir, even though 56 of her relatives (all Catholics) had prior hereditary claims.

As far as we can tell, it may have been orthodox Lutheran intransigence that began Christina's move away from the religion her father had died for at Lützen. In the 1540s Swedish church authorities were divided into two camps, the moderates and the hard-liners, who argued strenuously over issues of doctrine and liturgy. The free-thinking queen was impatient with the stubborn conservatism of clergy who were deaf to calls for further reform. She also found the censoriousness of the Lutheran top brass to her extravagant lifestyle not to her taste. Her mind turned towards Catholicism and, in 1650, she sent a secret message to Rome by the hand of the Portuguese ambassador, mentioning the possibility of conversion. The result was the arrival of a delegation led by the Jesuit scholar, Paolo Casati.

It is important to understand the background of Christina's change of religion. She had been brought up in an atmosphere of aggressive Lutheranism, knowing that it was her duty to be true to her father's legacy as a champion of the reformed faith. A major part of her responsibility was to marry in order to secure the dynasty and the Protestant succession. But intellectually she was not wedded to Sweden's official religion: her wide reading had left her with doubts about Lutheran dogma - and, perhaps, about all religious dogma. While the philosopher in her questioned several aspects of belief, the queen in her was expected to endorse theological certainties. Not only that; she was expected to set a sober moral example. The freedoms she had enjoyed as a high-spirited child and teenager were diminishing. She was now a young woman in her prime - and still high-spirited. But was she also homosexual?


Philosopher René Descartes explains his ideas to the scholarly queen c.1650

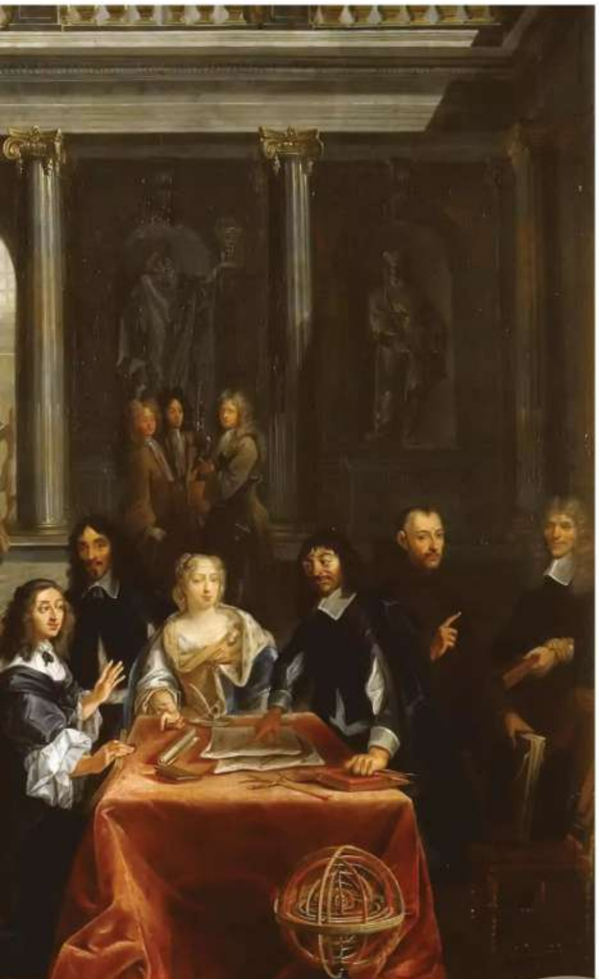
There is no doubting her masculine demeanour and, in later life, she had at least one intensely close relationship with another woman. But she also scandalised her people by indulging in a series of erotic adventures with various male favourites, on whom she bestowed extravagant proofs of her affection. Bearing in mind her aversion to childbirth, it is probable that she never allowed any amour to go too far.

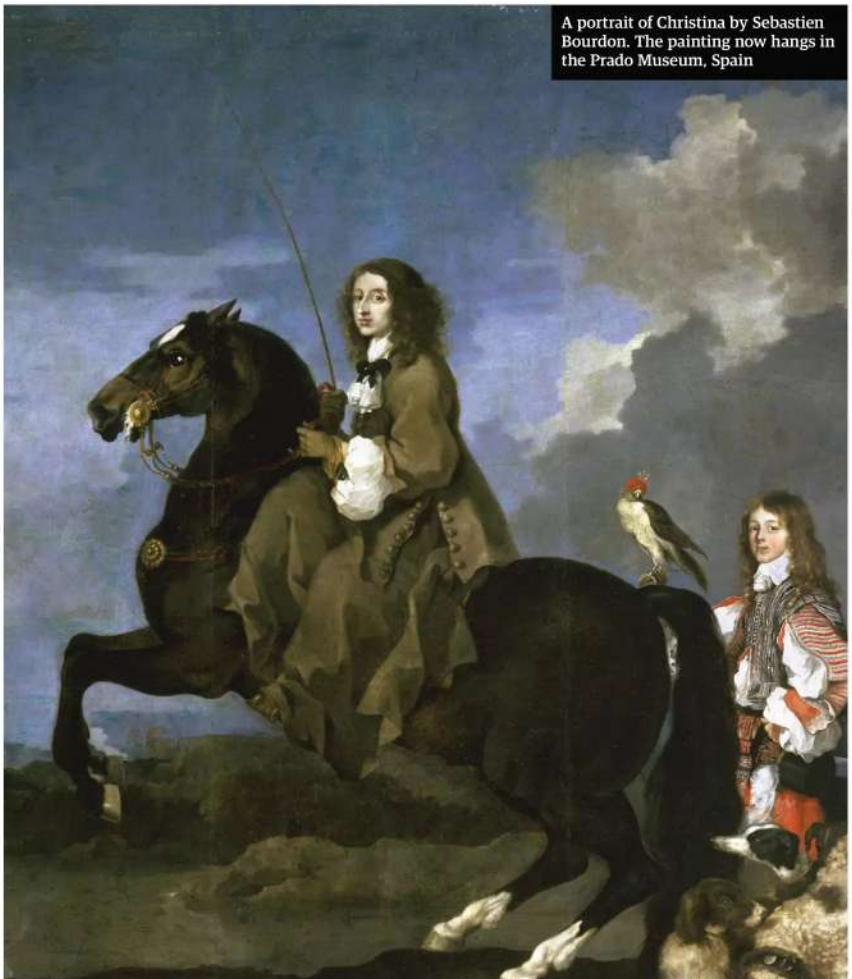
"The free-thinking queen was impatient with the stubborn conservatism of clergy"

Whatever the truth of Christina's sexuality, it was yet another aspect of her life which piled on the pressure. In 1651 she had a nervous breakdown. She became unstable in judgement. This was demonstrated dramatically in the case of Arnold Messenius, a spy, troublemaker and intriguer who had spent years in jail, who was released by the queen and raised to high rank. His way of repaying his benefactress was to call her 'Jezebel' and spread risqué stories about her. Christina 'flipped'. In a fit of rage she demanded Messenius' immediate execution - and that of his 17-year-old son. Not long after this the queen dismissed her long-term favourite, Magnus De la Gardie and exiled him. Messenius, undoubtedly, deserved his fate but he and De la Gardie were drawing attention to widely held criticisms that were damaging the crown.

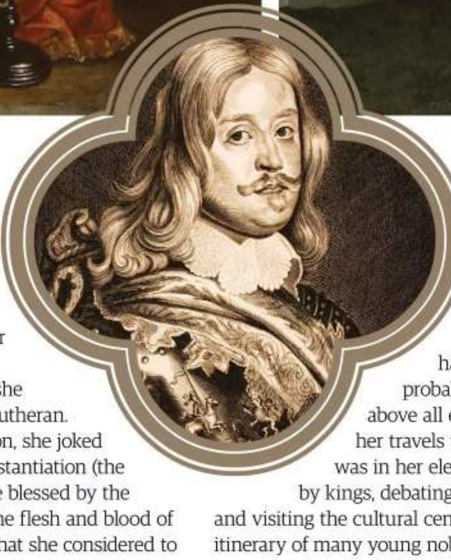
News of an unconventional French doctor/philosopher, Pierre Bourdelot, reached Stockholm and Christina sent for him to try his skills on her. Those 'skills' included exposing his patient to erotic literature. Bourdelot was a libertine who followed the hedonistic principle of François Rabelais, "fais ce que voudras" ("do as you please"). Confronted by the depressed and exhausted young queen, he ignored such conventional medical treatments as bleeding and advised her to relax and enjoy herself, casting all restraints aside. He may have been simply telling Christina what she wanted to hear and he certainly left for France laden with gifts from his grateful patient. His 'medical advice' released the tension in Christina's life. She would do what she had long contemplated but feared to put into action. She packed up her treasures and had them despatched to Antwerp and, in February 1654, she informed her council of her decision to abdicate in favour of her cousin.

By mid-June she had departed at the head of a cavalcade of carriages and wagons and over 250 attendants, having arranged a suitable financial package to enable her to live comfortably in exile. She made no mention of her intentions to convert, in case that affected the negotiations. Not until she reached Antwerp did she become a Catholic in a ceremony on 24 December, an event that was kept





A portrait of Christina by Sebastien Bourdon. The painting now hangs in the Prado Museum, Spain



Right: Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, the Swedish diplomat who thrived under Christina's rule

secret for almost another year after the fact.

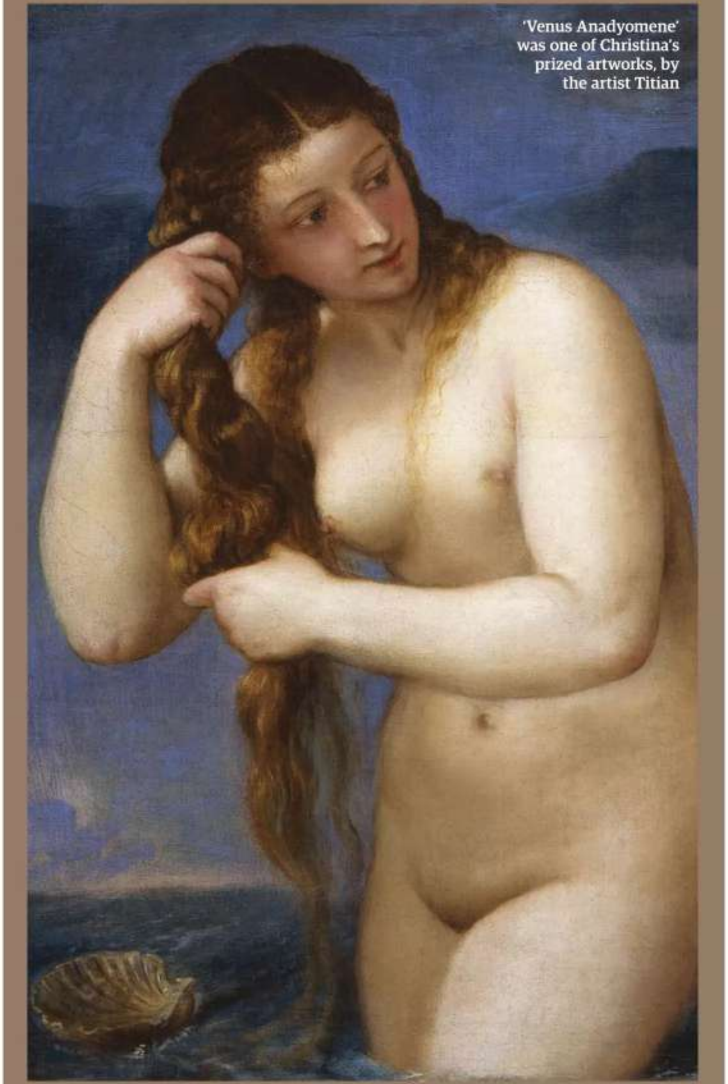
But how deep-felt was her conversion? For the remainder of her long life she was no more a devout Catholic than she had previously been a good Lutheran. Attending her first communion, she joked about the doctrine of transubstantiation (the belief that the bread and wine blessed by the priest was transformed into the flesh and blood of Christ). This was something that she considered to be philosophical nonsense.

Certainly, the ethos of her chosen church was more attractive than that of straight-laced Protestantism. She enjoyed the externals of Baroque Catholicism – the paintings, architecture, sculpture and music. But Christina's morals showed no reformation. Devout Catholics were as scandalised by her behaviour as Swedish Lutherans had been. In all probability, what she loved above all else was freedom. In her travels through Europe she was in her element – being fêted by kings, debating with great thinkers, and visiting the cultural centres that were on the itinerary of many young noblemen making the 'grand tour'. As Christina's biographer puts it, the Roman church appealed to her as, "it was, after all, in Rome."

Ironically, escape from Sweden and the burdens of office did not give her the total freedom she craved. As a private person, she was no longer protected by royal privilege. This she found difficult to accept. She was, for example, genuinely surprised when a petulant action while a guest in a foreign court aroused protest. What was the event? She ordered the summary execution of a servant who had displeased her. Even in Stockholm the punishment of the Messeniuses had been carried out with a semblance of legal sanction. Christina made a leisurely progress to Rome where she was rapturously received by Pope Alexander VII, a fellow scholar and connoisseur. She took up residence in a wing of the Vatican placed at her disposal. Her conversion was considered a great Catholic coup and was marked by banquets, theatrical performances, firework displays and other celebrations that went on for more than a month. She made Rome her principal residence for the rest of her life, eventually settling in the Palazzo Corsini in Trastevere, an imposing Renaissance residence designed by Donato Bramante, the architect who

The great collector

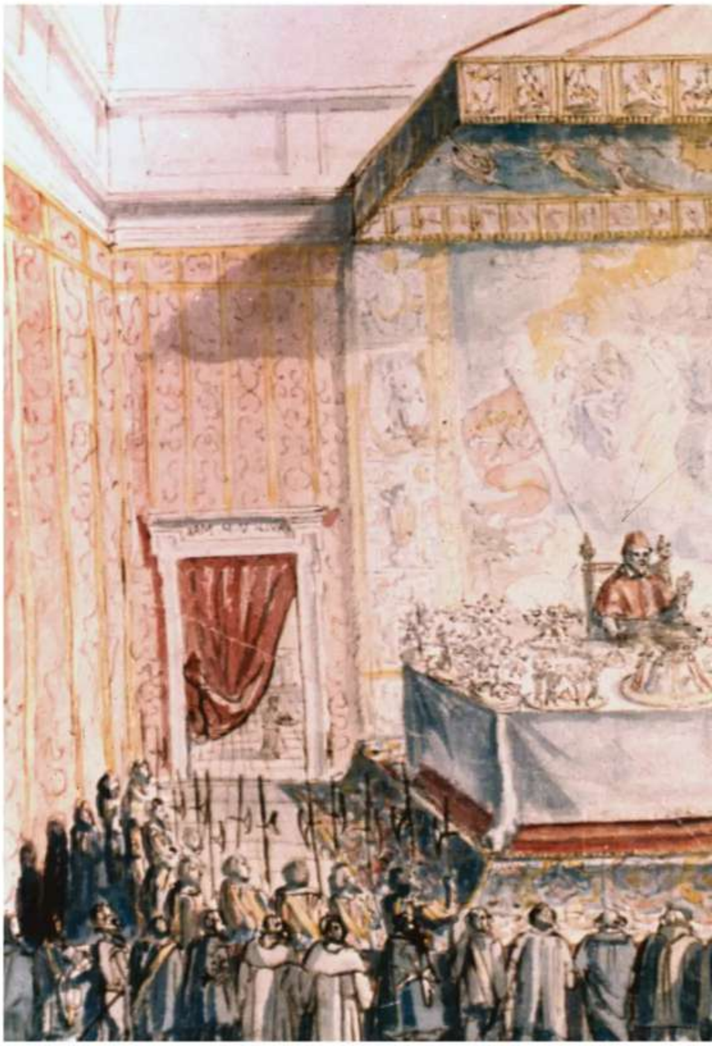
Christina developed an exquisite and unrivalled collection of art and literature



'Venus Anadyomene' was one of Christina's prized artworks, by the artist Titian

Christina amassed one of the biggest and best art collections in Rome, but its foundation had begun years before. During the Thirty Years' War, Swedish armies had plundered several great European palaces. From Prague alone, 472 artworks were despatched to Stockholm, where the queen built a new wing to house them. She was soon adding other items acquired by agents on her behalf - and developing her own taste. She wrote to one of her agents: "Here there are Dürers and other German masters whose names I do not know, which anyone but me would greatly admire [but] I would give them all for a pair of pictures by Raphael." It was art of the sunny South that appealed to her, particularly that of the Venetian school. When she abdicated she took her 40 favourite artworks with her.

Once settled in Rome she set about filling galleries at her villa with paintings, tapestries, books, manuscripts and classical statuary. She missed no opportunity to buy. Jewellery came from England when Charles I's treasures were dispersed. A Raphael altarpiece came from a cash-strapped nunnery. Christina loved portraits but it was the Venetian masters, such as Titian and Tintoretto, that touched her most. Her collection of Veroneses was the best ever assembled by anyone at any time, anywhere. It is no surprise that she possessed very few religious works.

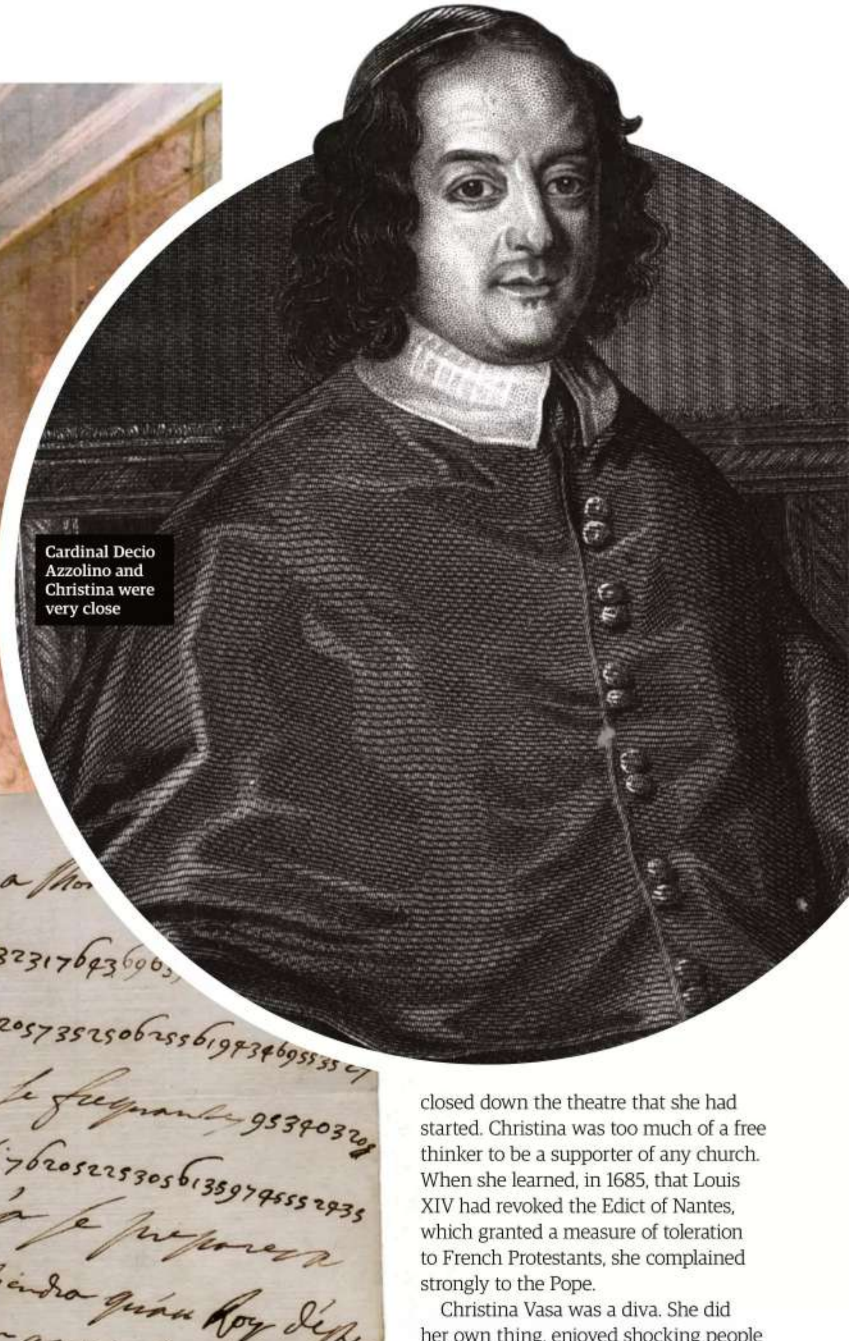


Above: Christina attended a banquet with Pope Clement IX after her conversion

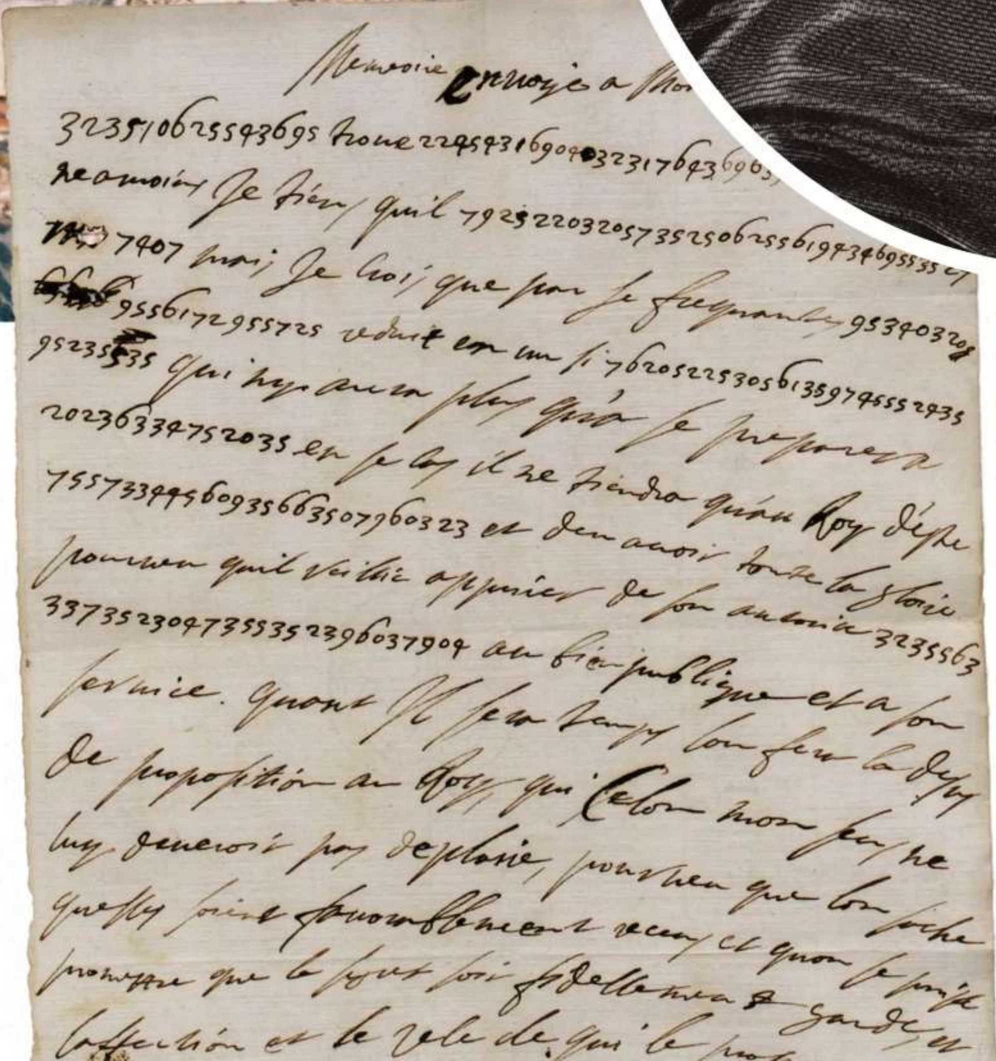
designed St Peter's Basilica. This became one of the leading foci of Rome's social life and one of its tourist attractions. Christina established a literary salon, which later developed into the Arcadian Academy and had a long, honourable history. Here, Rome's cognoscenti and visitors came to enjoy music, poetry and learned debate. She set up the city's first public theatre, she threw lavish parties, and she extended her patronage to young scholars and artists.

But her relationship with the Vatican was strained. After her tumultuous welcome it took little time for the gilt to wear off the gingerbread. Pope Alexander was scandalised by Christina's eccentric and morally dubious behaviour and refused to receive her. He suspected that her relationship with Cardinal Decio Azzolino, who looked after her finances, was more than friendship and described her as "a queen without a realm, a Christian without faith and a woman without shame." She got on better with his successor, Clement IX, but the next Pope, Innocent XI, regarded her as a danger to public morals and

Right: One of the letters written by Queen Christina of Sweden to Cardinal Decio Azzolino between 1666 and 1668



Cardinal Decio Azzolino and Christina were very close



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closed down the theatre that she had started. Christina was too much of a free thinker to be a supporter of any church. When she learned, in 1685, that Louis XIV had revoked the Edict of Nantes, which granted a measure of toleration to French Protestants, she complained strongly to the Pope.

Christina Vasa was a diva. She did her own thing, enjoyed shocking people and thrived on notoriety. She got away (literally) with murder, excusing herself, with a shrug, as a 'wild northerner'. She was governed by no clear moral code and any principles she had tended to be made up as she went along. She even made a couple of half-hearted attempts to reclaim the Swedish crown. No church could have endorsed her as a devout adherent. Yet, on her death, in 1689, her funeral was conducted with elaborate public ritual and she was buried in St Peter's Basilica, one of only three women to be accorded this honour in history.

1643 – 1715

King Louis XIV of France

The Sun King was both a shining beacon and a dangerously disruptive force

For a man that would become France's longest serving monarch, the young Louis spent almost two decades of his reign without a shred of power. From the tender age of four, he sat beneath the wing of his mentor, Cardinal Jules Raymond Mazarin. The Italian papal minister formed a strong bond with the king-in-waiting, overseeing his education and reinforcing two distinct principles - that the nobility of France were a dangerous faction that had to be kept in check, and that the sovereignty of the crown should be absolute. These were principles shared by the other key figure of Louis's early life - his mother, Queen Anne of Austria.

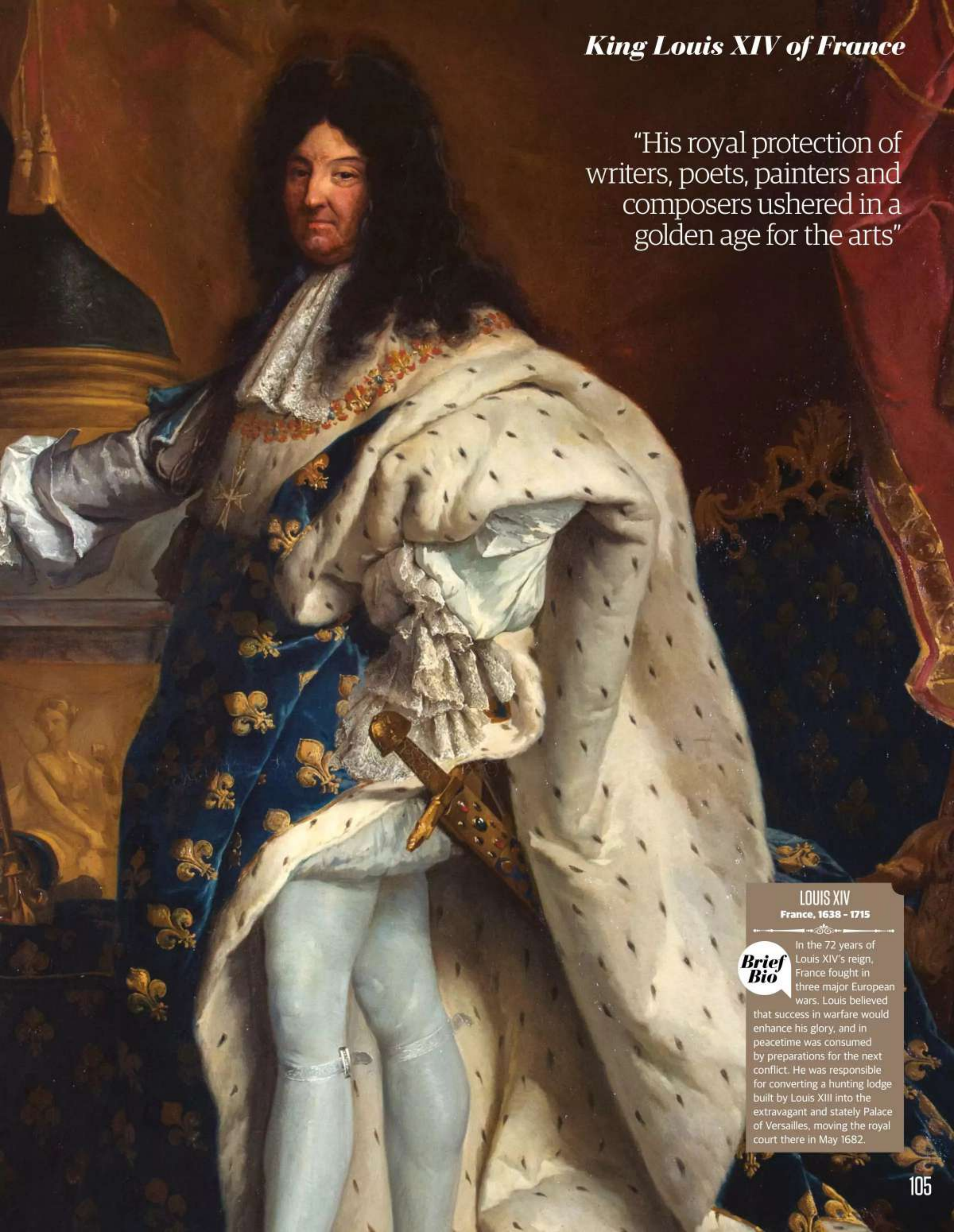
During his childhood, a civil war known as The Fronde erupted across France - a conflict that saw the disenfranchised nobility, the lawmakers of the Parlement de Paris and the people of France themselves band together to overthrow Anne and her pitbull of a first minister. Mazarin had levied high taxes in order to slow the growth of the Parisian population and the nation as a whole, but it had only served to anger the people. France had also been locked in the Thirty Years' War with Spain for the best part of 13 years, and its continued commitment to the conflict had ground down to a financially ruinous stalemate.

With this in mind, Anne and Mazarin took drastic action with a single goal - consolidating power in the crown for Louis's true ascension. France soon signed a treaty with Spain, the Peace of Westphalia, which saw it officially recognise the sovereignty of the other nations within Europe. It was the formation of an alliance of royal self-determination with each nation involved officially recognising the right of each ruler to control their own kingdom. The treaty effectively shredded the power of the French parliament and the nobility, but this bold move to consolidate Louis's future would nearly tear the country apart.

For the next five years, the young king would find himself bundled into the shadows. His country was at war with itself and he, the linchpin of his protector's machinations, was a target constantly under threat. He was smuggled out of Paris multiple times during the troubles and sometimes forced to live in hiding like a pauper as the conflict raged on. Those leading the revolt were the Frondeurs, political rebels who were opposed to Mazarin and Anne, but their ultimate lack of desire to remove Louis from the throne saw the revolt fizzle out as the young king came of age.

When Mazarin died in 1661, Louis's true reign had finally begun. Now in control of France, Louis's character began to form. He shocked every minister and politician in Paris by imprisoning Mazarin's successor, corrupt finance minister Nicolas Fouquet following a three-year-long trial, and then declaring

Louis is recorded by eyewitnesses as having said on his deathbed: "Je m'en vais, mais l'État demeurera toujours." ("I depart, but the State shall always remain")



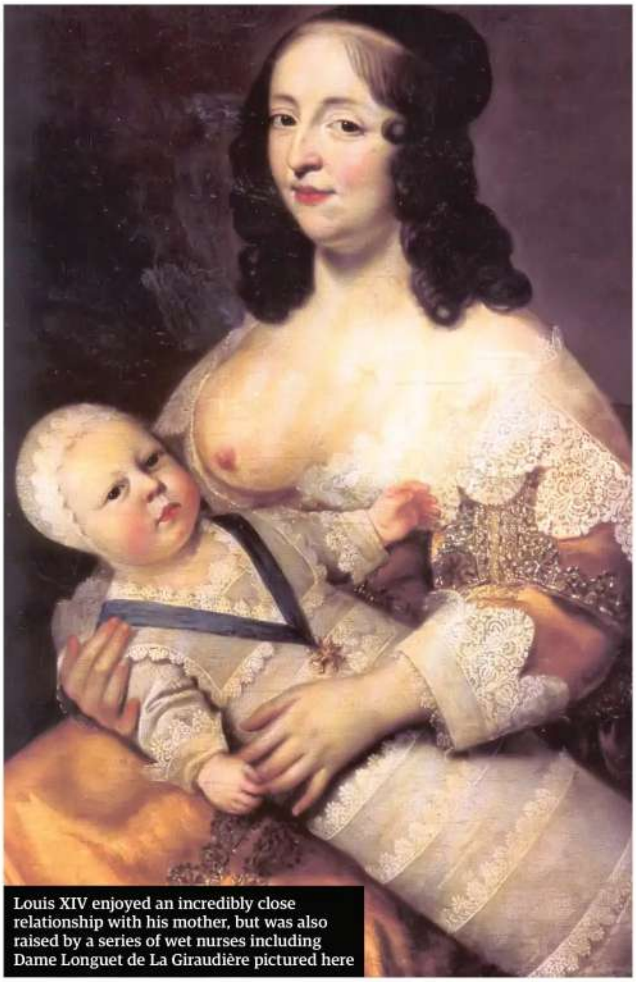
> "His royal protection of writers, poets, painters and composers ushered in a golden age for the arts"

LOUIS XIV

France, 1638 - 1715

Brief Bio

In the 72 years of Louis XIV's reign, France fought in three major European wars. Louis believed that success in warfare would enhance his glory, and in peacetime was consumed by preparations for the next conflict. He was responsible for converting a hunting lodge built by Louis XIII into the extravagant and stately Palace of Versailles, moving the royal court there in May 1682.



Louis XIV enjoyed an incredibly close relationship with his mother, but was also raised by a series of wet nurses including Dame Longuet de La Giraudière pictured here

> When Louis assumed control of the crown in his early 20s, he knew the political influence of the crown was waning in Paris, so he moved the seat of French power to Versailles

himself his own first minister. He had made a very public statement to his subjects: I am the king, and my rule is absolute.

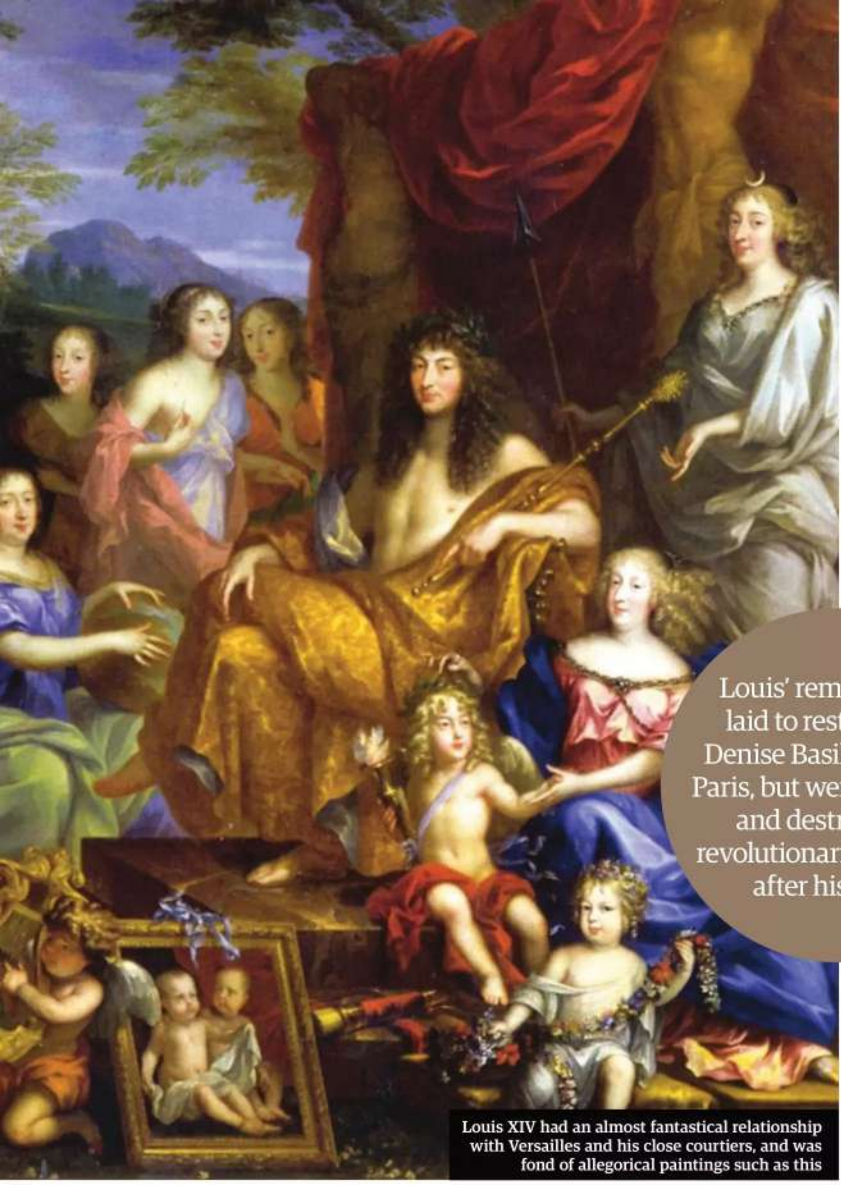
This self-assurance was Louis in his purest form - a man who saw himself as the centre of his realm in all matters. It was a quality that manifested itself as selfishness and defiance in the early years of his reign as he began openly dismantling many of the policies enacted by Mazarin and his mother. Louis was a true reformist monarch, one that relished the desire to oversee all aspects of his nation. He was also a debauched creature, one who embraced wine, women and excess with wanton abandon, but he proved early on he was a shrewd soul who refused to be cajoled by his ministers.

In the decade that followed, Louis began reforming French law and practices with a never-before-seen fervour. With Fouquet removed, he appointed Jean-Baptiste Colbert as controller-general of finances in 1665 and oversaw the reduction of the national debt through a much more efficient approach to taxation. Another surprising move was his decision to make all nobles exempt from taxes - it seemed ludicrous to the common man, but it was a stroke of political genius. The nobility were now bound to the whim of the king, having to prove their status without angering the crown.

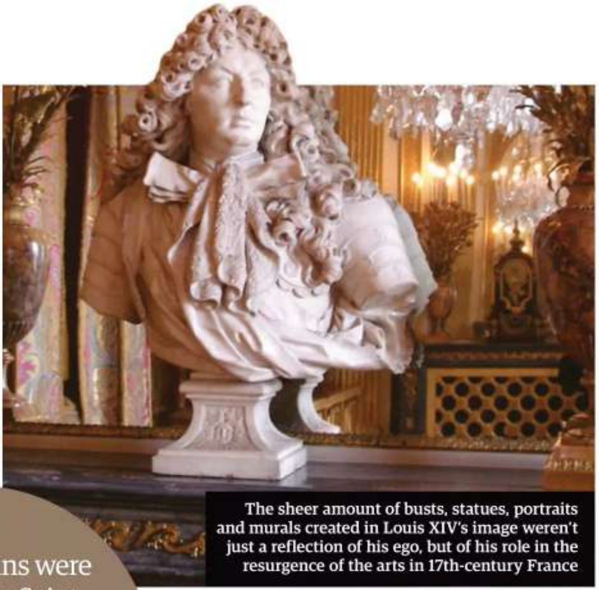
Louis wasn't willing to bow to any section of his kingdom, especially those that had revolted against his protectors in his youth, but the endlessly confident and self-assured monarch understood that a balance would need to be established. He knew ministers in Paris believed that they were above the king's edicts, so he upended their machinations by unofficially moving the political seat of power to Versailles, a simple royal hunting lodge that Louis revitalised into an opulent palace to rival any in Europe. Eventually the true seat of power would be moved from Paris to Versailles as Louis literally re-sculpted the kingdom around himself.

He also made a controversial decision on something that many of his predecessors had ignored - supporting a key component of the fast-forming middle class of France. By building the Hôtel national des Invalides in Paris, which served as a hospital and retirement home for French war veterans, Louis was one of the first French kings to use royal influence to acknowledge and protect those that had sacrificed so much in his family's name. Whether it was a solely political move or one made out of Louis's own compassion, it made a growing faction of the burgeoning bourgeoisie a powerful new supporter.

His reforms also extended to the cultural, as a result of his own passion for sculpture, theatre and literature. During his rule, Louis brought the Académie Française under his patronage and used it to turn Versailles into the cultural epicentre of Europe. His royal protection of writers, poets, painters and composers ushered in a golden age for the arts - soon everything from fashion to dance choreography was influencing the entire continent. Louis wanted to become the Sun King, the source of all light, and his efforts were paying off.

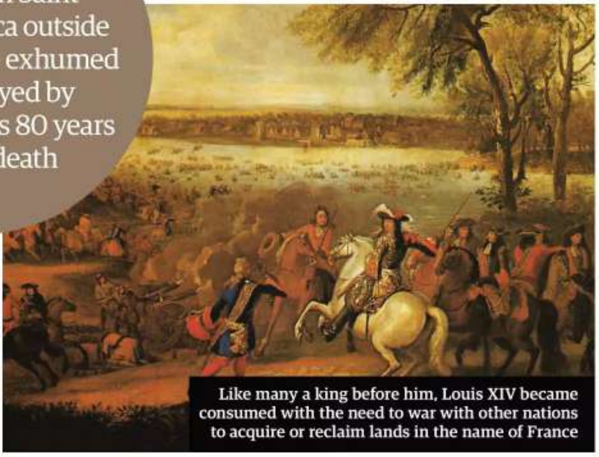


Louis XIV had an almost fantastical relationship with Versailles and his close courtiers, and was fond of allegorical paintings such as this



The sheer amount of busts, statues, portraits and murals created in Louis XIV's image weren't just a reflection of his ego, but of his role in the resurgence of the arts in 17th-century France

Louis' remains were laid to rest in Saint-Denise Basilica outside Paris, but were exhumed and destroyed by revolutionaries 80 years after his death



Like many a king before him, Louis XIV became consumed with the need to war with other nations to acquire or reclaim lands in the name of France

"He ruled for an incredible 72 years – the longest reign of any European monarch in history – and left a lasting impression on the kingdom"

For the first half of his reign, Louis's actions as king of France were informed by his hunger to establish both himself and his kingdom as the dominant power in Europe. As such, the French monarch wasn't willing to be held at bay by the Peace of Westphalia that had secured the end of the Thirty Years' War. France had been too long under the heel of England, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. France needed to reassert itself – and that meant war.

As a warring monarch, the darker side of Louis was brought to the surface. He funded France's involvement in the War of Devolution (1667-68) over control of the Spanish Netherlands, France's power base – it ultimately proved a tactical failure when England, Sweden, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire united against him, but it worked wonders for his image. By directing the conflict from the front line, he solidified his image as the proverbial Sun King in the minds of both his soldiers and his people.

That hunger for greater status led Louis to a renewed conflict that proved far more fruitful in the form of the Dutch War (1672-78). The Sun King wanted the Spanish Netherlands and he was willing to do anything to acquire them. The war nearly bankrupted the kingdom, but it bolstered the realm with new lands and territories and the confirmation of France's ascension in the political theatre of Europe. Those same desires drove him to the War of the Grand Alliance (1688-97), in which all the major powers of Europe rose up to halt France and Louis's hunger for more territory.

In his later years, Louis XIV's character went through something of a transformation, and with it so did the state of the realm. While devout from birth, his religious leanings began to radicalise and it was here that his Catholic upbringing took hold. France was a Protestant nation (and a poorer one for all Louis's wars), but the monarchy was absolute, so Louis imposed the same reform in the religious sphere that he had used elsewhere. He revoked the Edict of Nantes, issued by his grandfather Henry IV in 1598, which had granted freedom of worship and other rights to French Protestants (Huguenots). He then razed Protestant churches to the ground and created a culture of fear that drove Protestants in their thousands out of the country in exodus.

On 1 September 1715, Louis XIV succumbed to gangrene at Versailles, leaving the kingdom to his heir, great-grandson Louis, Duke of Anjou. Louis XIV ruled for an incredible 72 years – the longest reign of any European monarch in history – and in that time the man on the throne left a lasting impression on the kingdom. He revitalised France, rebuilding the economy and fortifying the nation as the dominant military power in Europe. But he lost the people he gained as the resplendent and opulent Sun King, forcing religious reform in a time where spiritual diversity had barely found an equilibrium.

If Louis XIV was guilty of one thing, it was an unrelenting need to shed weakness. From consolidating his personal rule to needless territorial wars, the Sun King was a man who shaped France by the nature of his desires.

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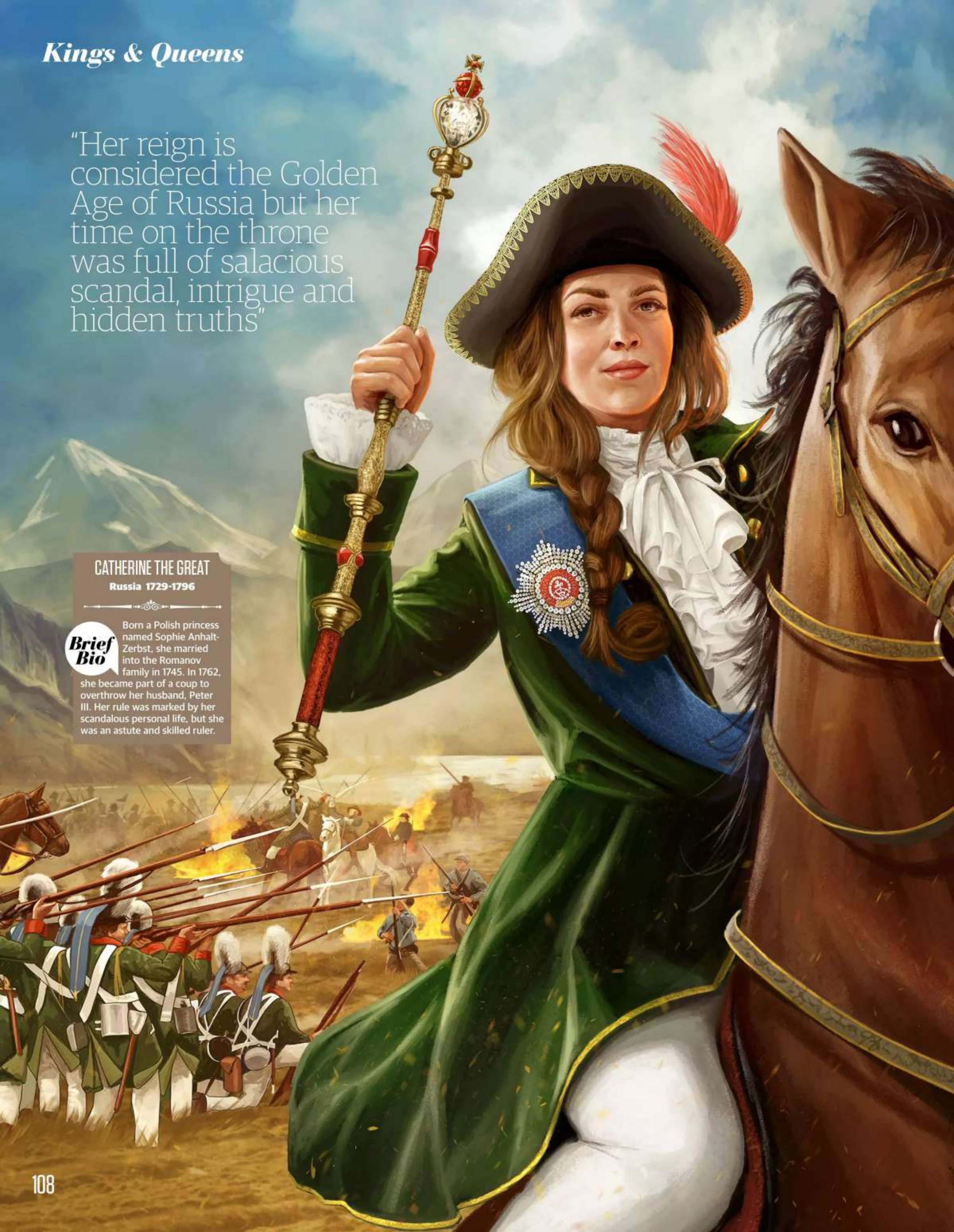


"Her reign is considered the Golden Age of Russia but her time on the throne was full of salacious scandal, intrigue and hidden truths"

CATHERINE THE GREAT

Russia 1729-1796

Brief Bio

Born a Polish princess named Sophie Anhalt-Zerbst, she married into the Romanov family in 1745. In 1762, she became part of a coup to overthrow her husband, Peter III. Her rule was marked by her scandalous personal life, but she was an astute and skilled ruler.

1762 – 1796

Catherine the Great

How the unstoppable Russian ruler enthralled an empire with sex, lies and military might

She has gone down in history as 'Catherine the Great' thanks to her dedication and devotion to her adopted country. One of the Russian Empire's greatest leaders, Catherine oversaw its unprecedented expansion, a series of military successes and the arrival of the Russian Enlightenment. Her reign is considered the Golden Age of Russia but her time on the throne was full of salacious scandal, intrigue and hidden truths that others used to tarnish her legacy. So, what really happened during her reign?

Catherine was born in 1729 as Princess Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst, an impoverished German royal. Her prospects were dim until Elizabeth, empress of Russia, wrote to Sophie's mother proposing a match with her nephew and heir, Grand Duke Peter of Holstein. It was keenly accepted and Sophie was determined to seize her destiny, learning to speak Russian fluently, which greatly impressed Elizabeth. She was a perfect fit for the Russian throne.

In contrast, her betrothed was a terrible choice for an emperor. Born and raised in Germany, Peter was brought to Russia aged 14 and he hated it. He refused to convert to the Russian Orthodox Church – unlike Sophie, who converted and adopted a new name, Catherine, in 1744. A year later, the couple married in Saint Petersburg. Recalling the wedding in her memoirs, Catherine stated that her "heart predicted but little happiness; ambition alone sustained me."

Catherine thought greatness awaited her. Instead, her husband turned out to be a drunk who played with toy soldiers like a child. They despised each other and their marriage went unconsummated for several years. But Catherine didn't want to waste her life and she told herself that she would become "the sovereign Empress of Russia in [her] own right."

Feeling more than a little isolated and unloved, Catherine was getting desperate. After years of marriage, there was no heir, Elizabeth was breathing down her neck and the court was watching her every move. She started a series of affairs, firstly with Sergei Saltykov, a handsome rake and court member. Elizabeth actually encouraged their relationship, hoping it would result in a pregnancy.

Catherine finally gave birth to a long-awaited heir, Paul, in 1754. The paternity is still debated today but Catherine implied in her memoirs that it was Saltykov, though possibly only to spite Peter. Regardless, she succeeded in her purpose and stabilised her position at court as the mother of the future emperor.

However, Catherine barely saw her baby as Elizabeth whisked him away and raised him herself. Catherine was devastated and her affair with Saltykov ended when he was sent away, too. Meanwhile, Peter's behaviour became foolish, worrying those around him. His wife, having fulfilled her duty, couldn't bear Russia crumbling in his insipid hands because he had failed to do his. She began to mastermind his downfall.

Elizabeth died in 1761 and Peter became Peter III. Catherine was now empress consort but it wasn't enough – she wanted sole power. Support for her grew after Peter's childish behaviour at Elizabeth's funeral, where he created a game to alleviate his boredom. Taking advantage of this, Catherine openly grieved for the deceased empress, winning many admirers in the process.

Peter's behaviour was inexcusable. He skipped his own coronation and withdrew from the Seven Years' War – despite the fact Russia was winning – returning all the land that they had conquered from Prussia. His actions disrespected those killed or injured during the conflict, alienating the army. Peter's contempt for the Church and his desire to wage war against Russia's long-time ally of Denmark exacerbated growing hatred towards him. He flaunted his mistress, Elizaveta Vorontsova, stating his desire to divorce Catherine and disinherit their son.

By April 1762, the situation was unbearable. Peter publicly humiliated Catherine at a state banquet by denouncing her as a fool, leaving her in tears. Whispers circulated that night that the emperor, incensed and drunk, had ordered his wife's arrest. Fortunately, Prince Georg Ludwig of Holstein, Catherine's uncle, managed to dissuade him from committing such an impulsive act. It was the final straw and Catherine knew that she and her son were now in grave danger.

The empress knew that if her coup was to succeed, she needed someone with influence and power by her side. She started an affair with Grigory Orlov, a lieutenant of the Izmailovsky Guards who had caught her eye the year before. Catherine had chosen her new lover wisely. Alongside his brother and fellow guard, Alexei, he had the political influence that she needed to sway the imperial guardsmen to her faction.

Aside from the political benefits, the couple also fell deeply in love and Orlov was determined to see his beloved on the Russian throne.

However, there was one obstacle that stopped Catherine from seizing power: she fell pregnant with Orlov's child. Previously, Catherine and Peter had been sleeping together infrequently and she could have claimed that he was the baby's father, however unlikely it may have seemed. But as communication between the two had practically stopped, there was no denying a secret liaison. Nobody could uncover the truth, lest it risk Catherine losing her valuable supporters. She managed to hide her pregnancy under voluminous dresses for months, fooling everyone around her. In April 1762, she secretly gave birth to a little boy, who ended up being raised far away from court.

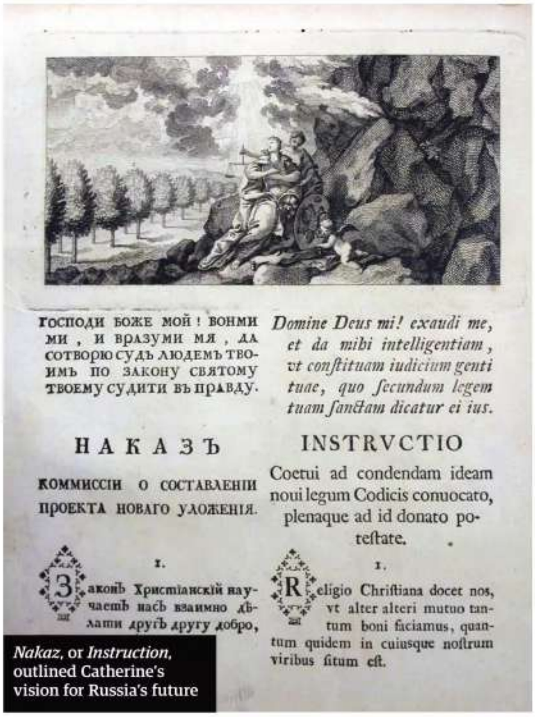
Peter soon left for Oranienbaum, in preparation for his fight against Denmark, while Catherine stayed at the nearby palace of Monplaisir. Her supporters prepared themselves and among them were the Orlov brothers, a number of guardsmen and Princess Dashkova, Elizaveta's sister. Even Nikita Panin, the politician entrusted as Paul's governor by Elizabeth, supported Catherine. With his control over her heir, Panin's backing was vital for the empress if she wanted the takeover to be seen as legitimate.

Peter ignored rumours of an impending coup but a conspirator was arrested on 27 June. Fearing that she would be exposed, Catherine, barely dressed, climbed into a waiting carriage and rode straight to Saint Petersburg in the early hours of 28 June. She headed to the barracks of her loyal guardsmen, visiting the Izmailovsky regiment first. The colonel of the regiment, Krill Razumovsky, had loved Catherine for years. They pledged their allegiance to her and those who resisted were arrested. The usurper made her way to the Winter Palace to be sworn in as Russia's new ruler, to the exclamation of the crowd there.

As for Peter, the seriousness of the situation sank in as he arrived at Monplaisir to find it abandoned, with Catherine long gone. Despairing, he begged with his estranged wife, hoping to negotiate an escape to his native duchy of Holstein with Elizaveta. The answer was no. Peter fell into a drunken stupor, while Catherine readied herself outside the Winter Palace, wearing the uniform of a male guard. Climbing onto her horse, it was time to arrest her husband.

Word arrived of Peter's arrest and Catherine sent him a document of abdication, which he was forced to sign. Just over a week later, Peter was killed at Ropsha while in the custody of Alexei Orlov. Catherine waited a day before issuing a statement, claiming that Peter died of "a haemorrhoidal colic." But as Peter's body lay in state, it was bloody and bruised, the hallmarks of

> "The seriousness of the situation sank in as he arrived at Monplaisir to find it abandoned, with Catherine long gone"



ГОСПОДИ БОЖЕ МОЙ! ВОНМИ МИ, И ВРАЗУМИ МЯ, ДА СОТВОРЮ СУДЪ ЛЮДЕМЪ ТВОИМЪ ПО ЗАКОНУ СВЯТОМУ ТВОЕМУ СУДИТИ ВЪ ПРАВДУ.

Domine Deus mi! exaudi me, et da mibi intelligentiam, vt conſtituam iudicium genti tuae, quo ſecundum legem tuam ſanctam dicatur ei ius.

НАКАЗЪ

КОММИССІИ О СОСТАВЛЕНІИ ПРОЕКТА НОВАГО УЛОЖЕНІЯ.

INSTRVCTIO

Coetui ad condendam ideam noui legum Codicis conuocato, plenaque ad id donato poteſtate.

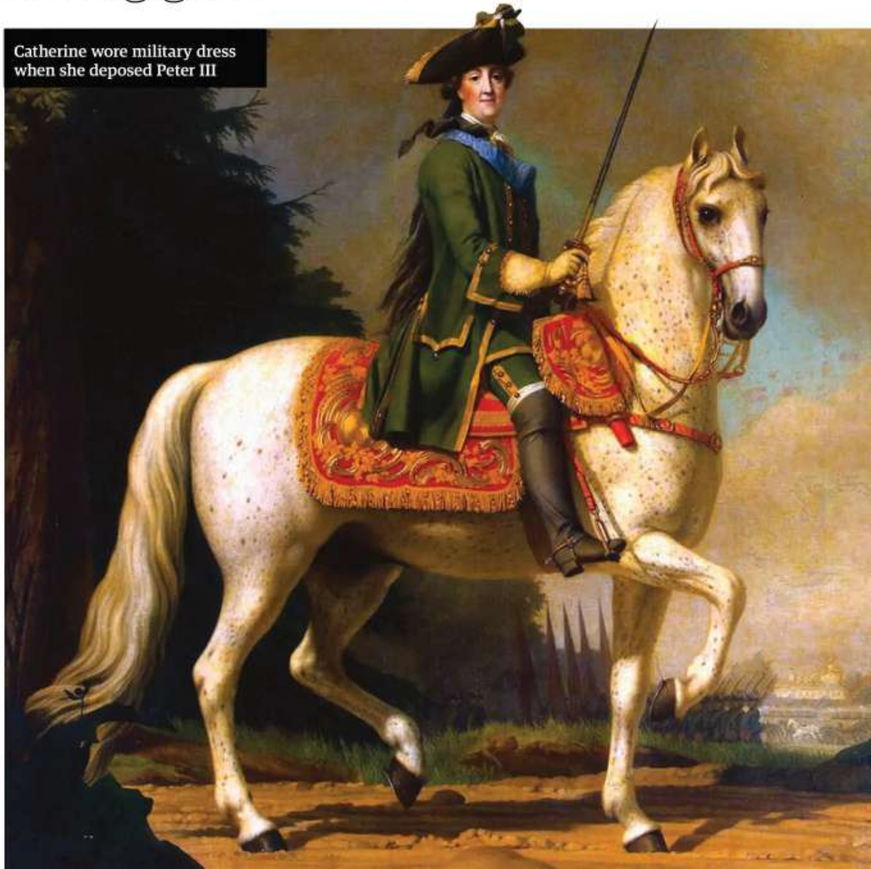
1.

Законъ Христіанскій научаетъ насъ взаимно дѣлати другъ другу добро,

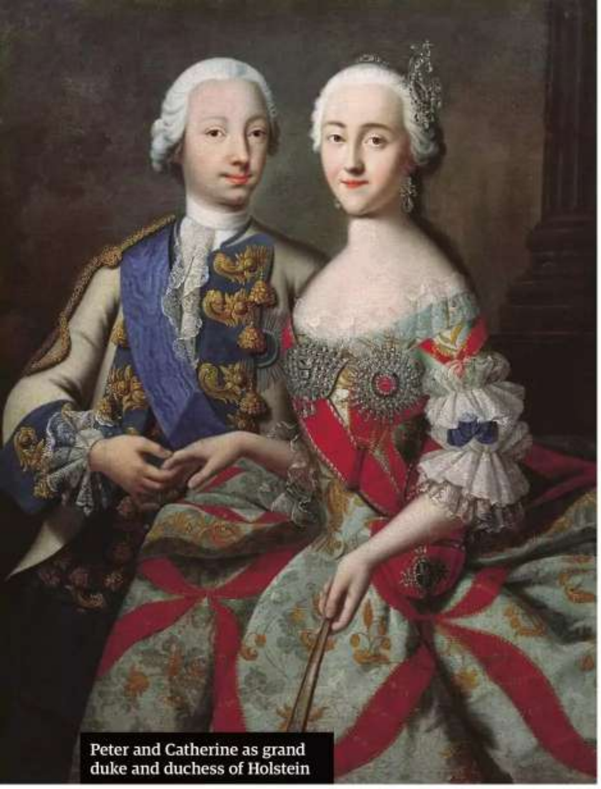
1.

Religio Chriſtiana docet nos, vt alter alteri mutuo tantum boni faciamus, quantum quidem in cuiusque noſtrum viribus ſitum eſt.

Nakaz, or *Instruction*, outlined Catherine's vision for Russia's future



Catherine wore military dress when she deposed Peter III



Peter and Catherine as grand duke and duchess of Holstein

strangulation likely committed by Alexei himself. When Alexei wrote to Catherine to inform her of Peter's illness, he stated ominously, "I fear that he might die tonight, but I fear even more that he might live through it."

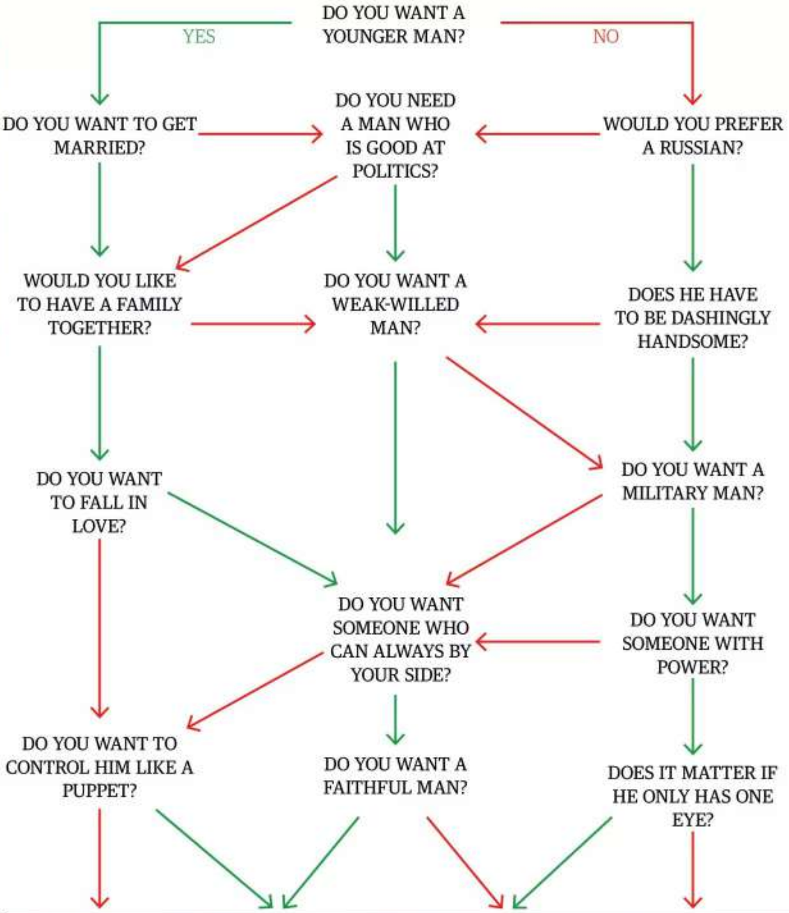
As suspicions arose that Catherine had committed regicide, she became nervous that her reign was already tainted. Was she involved in Peter's death? It couldn't be proven, but the fact that her position was now more secure is beyond certain. Catherine wanted sole, autocratic power, yet some of her co-conspirators, namely Panin and Dashkova, expected her to assume the regency on behalf of her young son. Catherine remained stubborn and was finally crowned in a sumptuous coronation ceremony in September 1762. Her message that she was in complete control came across loud and clear.

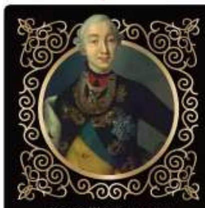
Catherine discovered the Enlighenment movement as a young girl and dreamed of modernising Russia. Conversing with some of the most famous French philosophers of the day, such as Voltaire and Diderot, Catherine had the opportunity to become the enlightened leader she craved to be. However, Russia was a mess. With a poor administrative system and a backwards economy, the country languished in the shadows of the other world powers. It needed a complete overhaul.

Catherine wanted to introduce a better education system, build new cities, develop Russian culture and possibly abolish serfdom. She wrote the Nakaz, also known as the Great Instruction, a momentous piece that took her two years to complete. It was inspired by the principles of Western philosophers and formed Catherine's idea of the perfect government. She presented it to the Legislative Commission, assembled in 1767, which consisted of approximately 500 people, all from different classes of society. On the surface, it advertised Enlightenment thinking as a way

Date for an Empress

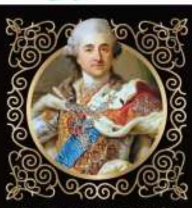
Who is the perfect lover for Catherine the Great?


DO YOU WANT A YOUNGER MAN?
YES
NO
DO YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED?
DO YOU NEED A MAN WHO IS GOOD AT POLITICS?
WOULD YOU PREFER A RUSSIAN?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A FAMILY TOGETHER?
DO YOU WANT A WEAK-WILLED MAN?
DOES HE HAVE TO BE DASHINGLY HANDSOME?
DO YOU WANT TO FALL IN LOVE?
DO YOU WANT A MILITARY MAN?
DO YOU WANT SOMEONE WHO CAN ALWAYS BY YOUR SIDE?
DO YOU WANT SOMEONE WITH POWER?
DO YOU WANT TO CONTROL HIM LIKE A PUPPET?
DO YOU WANT A FAITHFUL MAN?
DOES IT MATTER IF HE ONLY HAS ONE EYE?



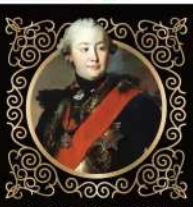
Peter III of Russia

Catherine's cold and childish husband hated his adopted country of Russia, managing to upset the army, the Church and the nobility just a few months into his reign. Catherine and Peter despised each other and he even threatened to divorce his wife and replace her with his mistress. Catherine deposed her husband in 1762 and he soon died under suspicious circumstances.



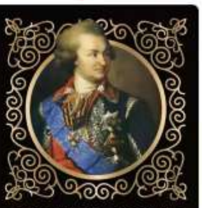
Stanisław Poniatowski

Catherine fell in love with Poniatowski while she was still a grand duchess and together they had an illegitimate daughter, Anna. Poniatowski was forced to leave the Russian court during the Seven Years' War and his affair with Catherine ended. They kept in contact and with Catherine's support, Poniatowski was elected king of Poland, although she used him as puppet.



Count Grigory Orlov

Orlov was Catherine's foremost supporter in her plot to overthrow her husband and played an instrumental role in the coup in 1762. He remained Catherine's favourite for over a decade and together they had an illegitimate son, Alexey. Orlov's downfall was guaranteed once she discovered his affairs with other women and she banished him from the court.



Prince Grigory Potemkin

Catherine and Potemkin had an extremely passionate, if short-lived, love affair. Just like Orlov, Potemkin supported Catherine during the coup and eventually succeeded him as her favourite. After their physical relationship ended, Potemkin remained by Catherine's side and was the most powerful man in her court for two decades before his early death aged 52.

Expansion of an Empire

01 Alaska Colonisation, 1766

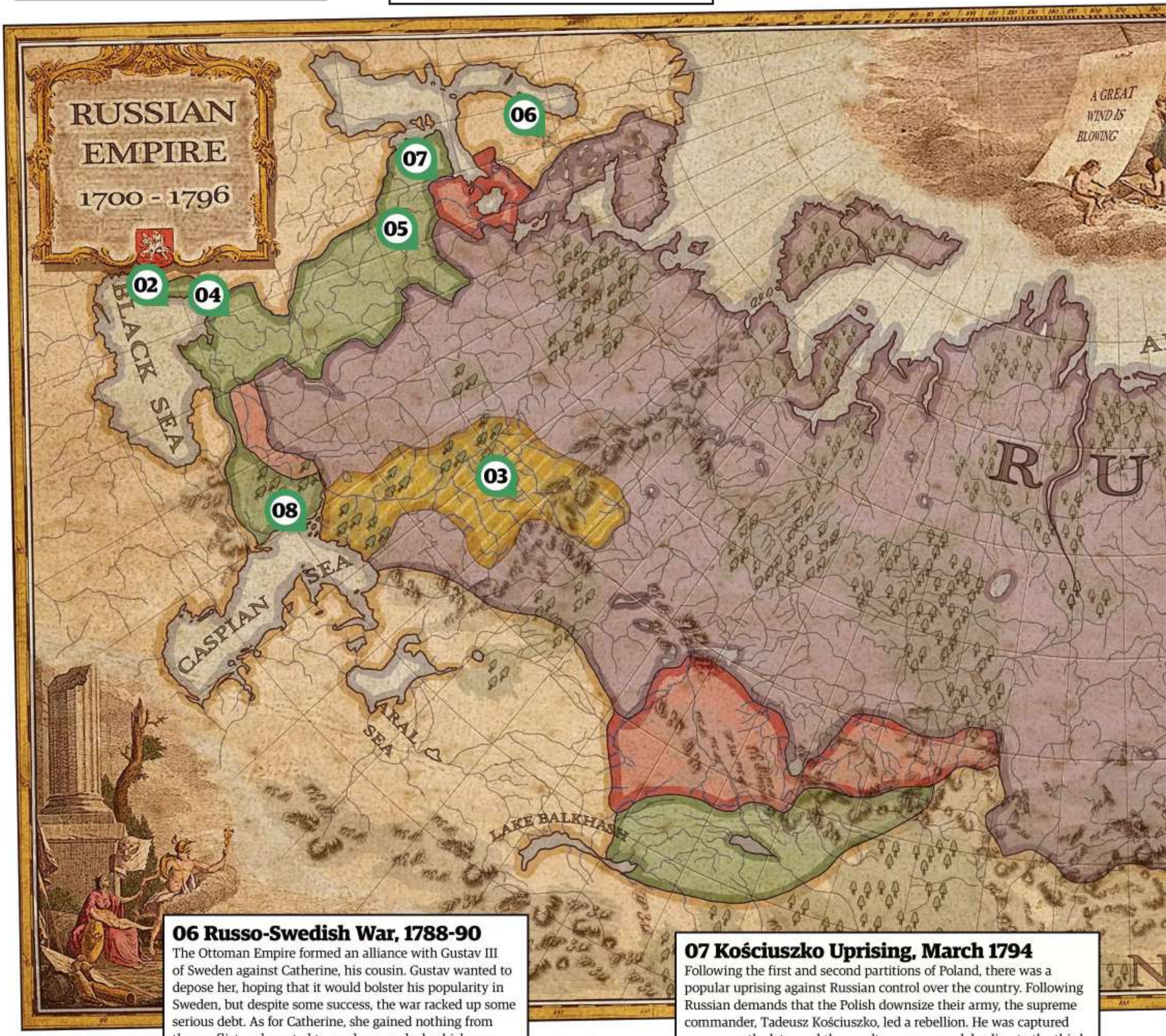
Catherine wrote to the governor of Siberia, declaring the indigenous people of the Aleutian Islands and the Alaska Peninsula to be Russian subjects. She instructed the Russian fur-traders to treat their new fellow subjects well. After this, tax collectors accompanied Russian fur-hunters on their voyages to Alaska and the government licensed fur-hunting expeditions.

02 First Russo-Turkish War, 1768-74

The first in a series of wars between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was sparked by a conflict over borders. Catherine's victory led to Russia expanding its influence in Europe and gaining territory in modern-day Ukraine. The Turks were forced to accept the Crimean Khanate's independence, giving an opportunity for Catherine to annex it later on.

03 Pugachev's Rebellion, 1773-75

After Catherine usurped the throne, she faced a number of rebellions from pretenders, with the most serious revolt led by a Cossack, Yemelyan Pugachev. He claimed to be the deceased Peter III and his rebellion gathered pace as the government failed to see it as a legitimate threat. Catherine eventually had it suppressed, leaving thousands of rebels dead.



06 Russo-Swedish War, 1788-90

The Ottoman Empire formed an alliance with Gustav III of Sweden against Catherine, his cousin. Gustav wanted to depose her, hoping that it would bolster his popularity in Sweden, but despite some success, the war racked up some serious debt. As for Catherine, she gained nothing from the conflict and wanted to reach peace deal, which was concluded in 1790.

07 Kościuszko Uprising, March 1794

Following the first and second partitions of Poland, there was a popular uprising against Russian control over the country. Following Russian demands that the Polish downsize their army, the supreme commander, Tadeusz Kościuszko, led a rebellion. He was captured seven months later and the revolt was repressed, leading to the third and final partition of Poland in 1795.

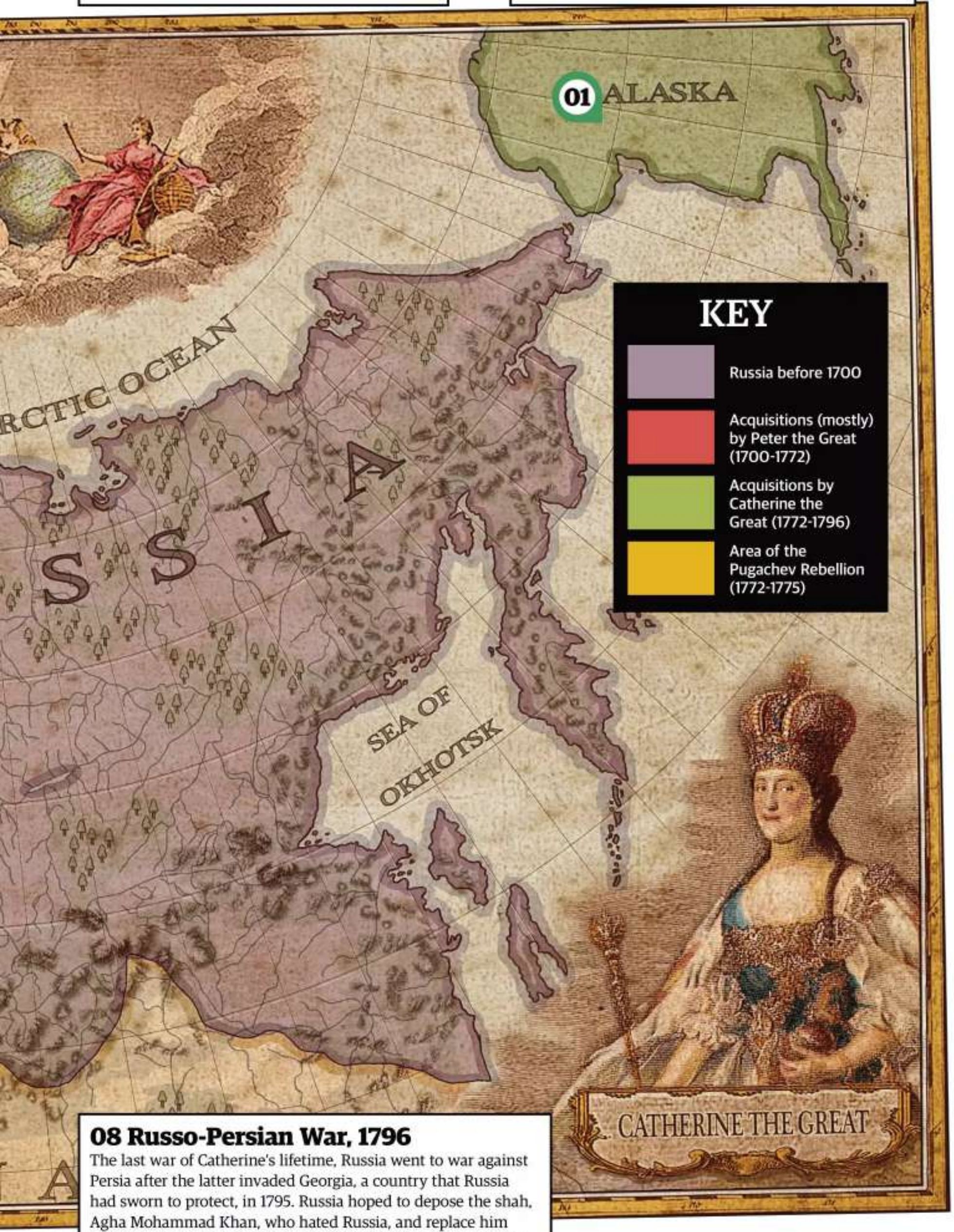
How Catherine extended Russian territory

04 Second Russo-Turkish War, 1787-92

The Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia again. They attempted to regain the territory that they had lost to Russia but instead suffered a defeat. Following the Treaty of Jassy in 1792, the Turks were forced to accept Russia's annexation of Crimea that had occurred in 1783.

05 Polish-Russian War, 1792

War broke out in Poland between the anti-Russian, pro-reform Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the anti-reform Targowica Confederation. The latter was supported by Catherine, who was angered by a new alliance between the Commonwealth and Prussia. Poniatowski believed Russia would eventually win and sought a ceasefire, to the anger of his allies.


01 ALASKA
RCTIC OCEAN
S S I A
SEA OF OKHOTSK
KEY
🟪 Russia before 1700
🟥 Acquisitions (mostly) by Peter the Great (1700-1772)
🟩 Acquisitions by Catherine the Great (1772-1796)
🟨 Area of the Pugachev Rebellion (1772-1775)
CATHERINE THE GREAT

08 Russo-Persian War, 1796

The last war of Catherine's lifetime, Russia went to war against Persia after the latter invaded Georgia, a country that Russia had sworn to protect, in 1795. Russia hoped to depose the shah, Agha Mohammad Khan, who hated Russia, and replace him with someone who liked the country. Catherine's armies were winning but following her death, her successor, Paul, withdrew the Russian troops.

to revitalise Russia – in reality, it reinforced Catherine's belief in absolutist monarchy.

The Commission failed to achieve anything before it was disbanded in 1768. It embodied the hypocrisy that Catherine would peddle throughout her reign – she wanted to be perceived around the world as an enlightened leader but the truth was a very different story. The obvious example is the issue of serfdom. At one time, Catherine may have considered reforming or abolishing serfdom in the Russian Empire altogether but the economy depended too heavily on the workforce, who belonged to the aristocracy, and Catherine ultimately relied on the nobles for support. Apart from slightly improving the rights of serfs, Catherine actually did nothing to improve their situation throughout her reign.

Nevertheless, she did accomplish some of her goals. She was committed to improving education in Russia to bring it in line with the West and alongside new towns and cities, she founded academies, libraries and schools across her vast empire. For the first time, free schooling became available for all children – except serfs – and the curriculum became standardised. Furthermore, Catherine championed education for women and even established the Smolny Institute for young noble girls in Saint Petersburg in 1764.

As a fierce patron of the arts, her personal collection of artwork was the largest in Europe at the time. Having amassed thousands of masterpieces, she founded the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg in 1764 and it is still a museum of art and culture today, open to the public since 1852. She also imported Western literature and encouraged the arrival of foreign artists and architects to improve Russia culturally. A woman on a mission, the empress even sent Russian academics abroad to learn the ways of Western culture and society and disseminate them back in the motherland.

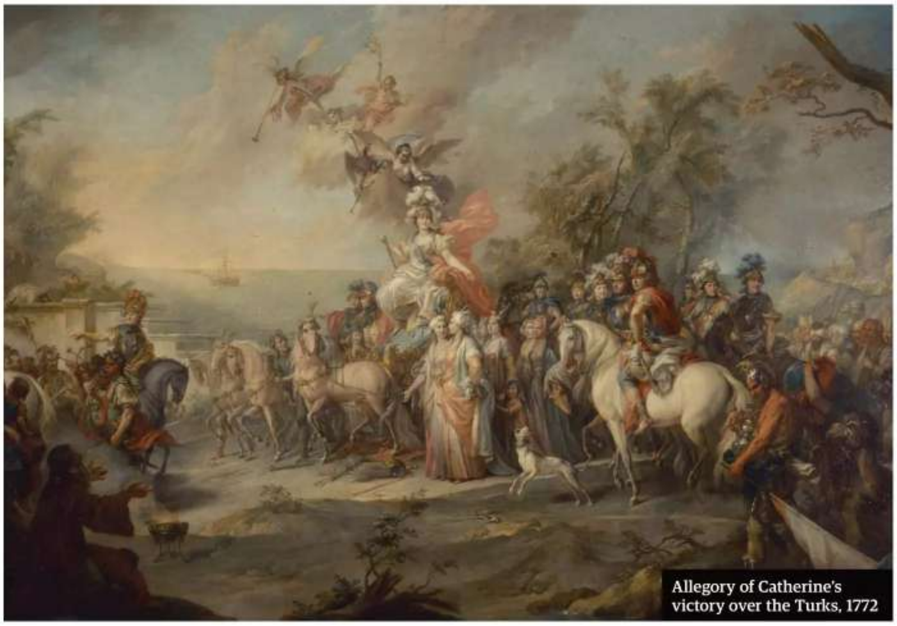
As for foreign affairs, Catherine took massive strides in comparison to her predecessors. She patronised her former lovers with titles, money and power throughout her reign. However, there was one that she went the extra mile for – Stanisław Poniatowski. They had had an affair back in 1755, when he was the Polish secretary to the British envoy in Russia, but it had ended after Poniatowski was forced to leave during the Seven Years' War, which pitched Russia against British-backed Prussia. He had hoped to reignite their romance but Catherine knew this was too dangerous and told him, "You are likely to get us both slaughtered."

Instead, when the Polish throne became vacant in 1763, Catherine promised it to Poniatowski. It was the perfect chance to expand her empire and he was elected under the threat of the Russian military in 1764. Straight away, Poniatowski attempted to pass a series of reforms that weren't part of Catherine's plan. She needed Poland to remain weak and her former lover was supposed to be her puppet, not a lone wolf. When rebellion broke out in Poland in 1768, partly in reaction to Russian influence in the country, Catherine invaded under the pretence of restoring control.

Her dominance over Poland concerned Prussia, Austria and the Ottoman Empire, which suffered a series of defeats at her hands during the ongoing Russo-Turkish War that broke out in 1768. These losses shifted the European power of balance in Russia's favour, no doubt to Catherine's delight. Yet the arrival of bubonic plague in Moscow between 1770 and 1772 and the resulting riots pushed Catherine into seeking a truce as a reprieve.

To rebalance the power in Europe, Russia, Austria and Prussia all agreed as neighbours of Poland to partition the country among themselves, without discussing it with the Polish king. As a result, Catherine gained around 92,000km2 of territory for her empire – almost the size of modern-day Portugal. It was the first of three partitions of Poland, which led to Poniatowski's downfall in 1795, just a year before Catherine's death. He spent his final years in Russia, surviving on a pension that was provided by the empress.

Following Catherine's victory over the Turks in the Russo-Turkish War in 1774, tensions were high with the Ottoman Empire. With the territory she gained, she established a province to the south of Russia, known as New Russia, now part of modern-day Ukraine). When she annexed Crimea in 1783, a former Turkish territory, a second conflict broke out. The second conflict, fought from 1787 to 1792, saw the Turks heavily defeated again and Catherine's authority over Crimea was secured. It was one of the greatest military achievements of her reign.


Allegory of Catherine's victory over the Turks, 1772

During the trouble with Poland and the first Turkish war, Orlov continued to dominate the court as Catherine's lover. During the decade since the coup, Orlov was rewarded with lands and titles and is credited for dealing with the Moscow plague riots. Catherine considered marrying him, until she realised that such a move was far too controversial. Despite concern about Orlov's power, he held no sway over Catherine or her governance of Russia. She knew that he was too politically inept to deal with such matters, choosing to consult Panin instead.

Orlov's relationship with Catherine sparked intrigue and jealously from others, especially Panin, and by 1771, he was plotting his rival's downfall. His scheming paid off as Catherine was made aware of Orlov's various infidelities. Angered and heartbroken, she sent Orlov away from court, never to regain her favour again.

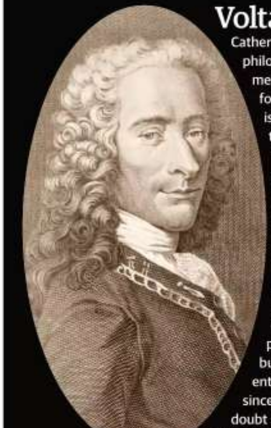
During her relationship with Orlov, Catherine became close to Grigory Potemkin. Their love story is infamous but not straightforward. They met on the night of the coup and Catherine rewarded him for his loyalty by promoting him to gentleman of the bedchamber, a position that allowed them to meet frequently. Potemkin had loved Catherine ever since and unlike the other men at court, he wasn't afraid of Orlov.

Potemkin was too bold, openly declaring his love for Catherine at every opportunity. She enjoyed his attention but was too hesitant to

Enlightenment pen pals

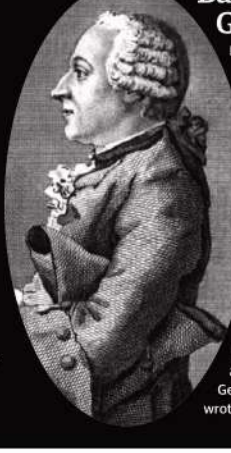
Catherine corresponded with many of the great minds of her day

Voltaire



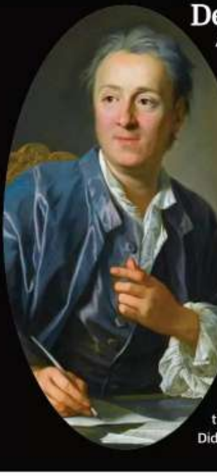
Catherine and the French philosopher Voltaire never met but wrote to each other for years. While Voltaire is famous for savaging the French monarchy for its extravagance, he approved of Catherine's role as an 'enlightened despot', nicknaming her the 'Star of the North'. Some have interpreted Catherine's side of the correspondence as a public relations exercise, casting her in a more positive light in Europe, but she had been an enthusiastic reader of Voltaire since she was a princess, so no doubt she was flattered to chat with one of her adolescent idols.

Baron von Grimm



Frederich Melchior, Baron von Grimm, hung out in Paris' progressive literary circle thanks to his acquaintance with Jean-Jacque Rousseau. He wrote a cultural newsletter for foreign sovereigns and nobility that were keen to keep up with 18th-century French fashions. However, Catherine and Grimm also kept up a personal correspondence for 26 years. Grimm fed her tidbits about what was going on in European courts while she patronised some of Grimm's preferred architects. Despite both being of German descent, the pair always wrote to one another in fluent French.

Denis Diderot



Another French thinker, Denis Diderot, is best known for co-founding and heavily contributing to the *Encyclopédie*, the definite work of Enlightenment thought. When the empress heard that he was in need of money, she offered to buy his library. She also appointed him caretaker of it until he died and paid him a 25-year salary in advance. Diderot felt obliged thank her in person in 1773, but the trip was mired when he tried to lecture her on the best way to govern Russia. Though Catherine dressed him down for this, she continued to patronise Diderot until his death in 1784.

pursue anything, perhaps because of Orlov. However, she didn't discourage Potemkin and, seeing his potential, Catherine began to forge him a political career – the start of his dramatic rise.

After suffering a severe eye injury, Potemkin suddenly left the court. Catherine missed him terribly and after 18 months, she demanded his return in 1767. She appointed him as an army paymaster before promoting him as the Guardian of Exotic Peoples for her Legislative Commission, a politically important role. When the First Russo-Turkish War broke out, Potemkin was desperate to go the front and Catherine allowed it, though she longed for his return. After Orlov's dismissal, Catherine distracted herself with a new, younger lover, Alexander Vasilchikov, much to Potemkin's disappointment when he briefly returned in 1772. However, Catherine's interest in Vasilchikov faded quickly, although she compensated him with a sizeable pension and lands. Instead, her thoughts turned back to Potemkin, now a war hero thanks to his military success abroad.

When Potemkin disappeared from court again at the start of 1774, Catherine finally accepted their love. He returned and their affair started, with Catherine in her mid-40s and Potemkin a decade younger. With his military experience, he was a useful advisor and the first of her lovers with whom Catherine shared power. She bestowed upon him a number of promotions, including governor-general of New Russia, granting him absolute power over the region.

The couple's numerous love letters to one another indicate that they secretly married. In a letter to Potemkin, Catherine refers to him as "my dear, sweet angel, my very own friend, my husband," and in another tells him that she'll "remain [his] true wife to the grave." Whether they actually married is uncertain, but considering the nature of the letters and Potemkin's influence at court, it is a possibility.

"Orlov's relationship with Catherine sparked intrigue and jealousy from others, especially Panin"

Unfortunately, their great love affair didn't last. Catherine and Potemkin were both passionate but, plagued with jealousies and insecurities, their relationship mutually cooled. By 1775, Catherine had a new favourite but unlike her previous lovers, Potemkin retained his position of personal and political influence over her for the rest of his life. In fact, he held so much control that rumours swirled that he procured new lovers for Catherine.

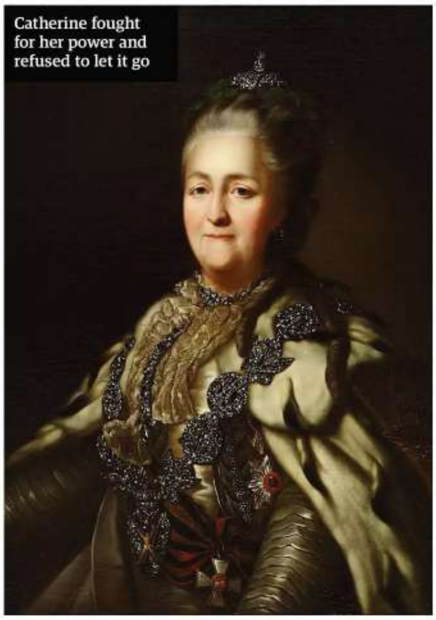
Scandalous gossip also spread that the empress' lovers were vetted for their bedroom skills by one of her ladies-in-waiting before she slept with them. This was likely baseless slander but Catherine's love for men was well known. Her sexuality became the focus of lewd jokes and crude satires designed to criticise her in Russia and further afield in Europe. Her vice was exposed – but Catherine was no less powerful as a result and neither was she ashamed.

While Potemkin was abroad as commander-in-chief during the Second Russo-Turkish War, Catherine caught sight of a vain young officer, Platon Zubov. At 22 years old, he was almost four decades younger than the empress, who at that point had turned 60. Their affair began in 1789 and Catherine loved him deeply. She relied on him, perhaps because of her advanced age, and Zubov rose far quicker than any of her previous lovers. However, the toy boy nature of this relationship once again opened the aging empress up to sexual ridicule.

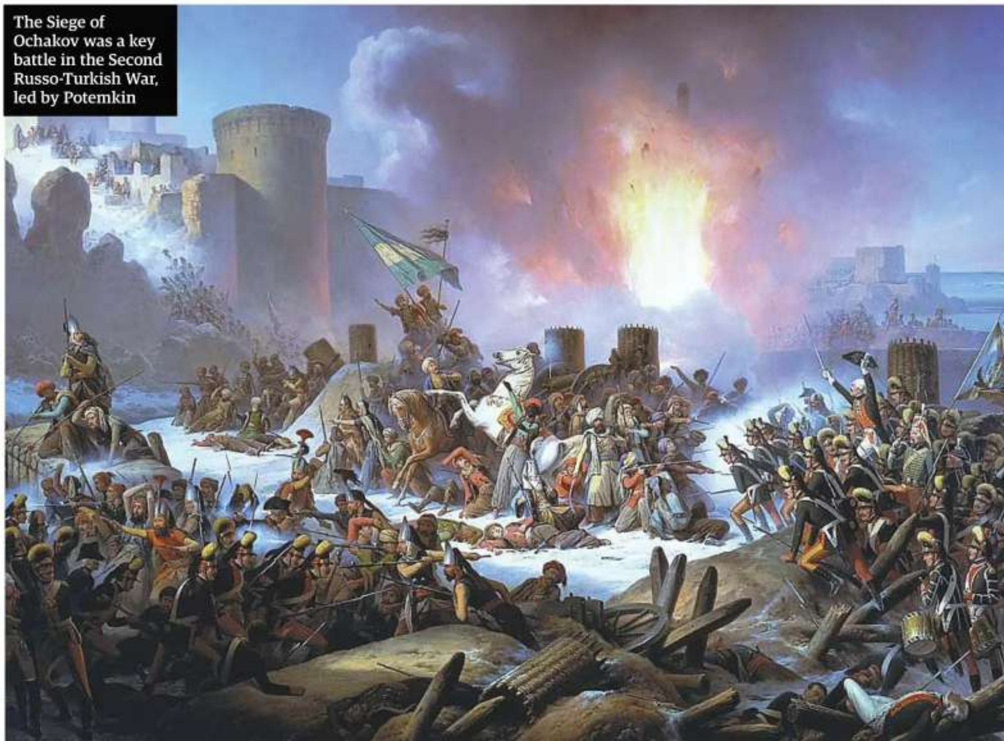
Catherine's happiness was hampered by the arrival of tragic news in October 1791 – Potemkin had died abroad while negotiating a peace treaty with the Turks. Catherine was grief-stricken. For the past years, he had been her pillar of strength and now she had to manage without him.

For the last five years of her life, the empress lavished her attention on Zubov. He played a crucial role in making decisions during her reign, leaving him envied and despised and the court couldn't understand Catherine's infatuation with him. Zubov even managed to convince the empress to give his brother command over her army in the Russo-Persian conflict, which began in April 1796, instead of a seasoned general. Although it turned out to be a good decision, with the younger Zubov returning in victorious glory, there is no denying that this was a different ruler to the one who had usurped the throne three decades earlier.

But Catherine never saw the outcome as she passed away in November 1796. Perverse stories of her unbridled sexuality surfaced, aimed at destroying her legacy. The most famous one claimed that she died engaging in bestiality with a stallion, which crushed her when its supporting harness snapped. The reality is actually far less vulgar – Catherine collapsed following a stroke, and never regained consciousness.



Catherine fought for her power and refused to let it go



The Siege of Ochakov was a key battle in the Second Russo-Turkish War, led by Potemkin

1837 – 1901

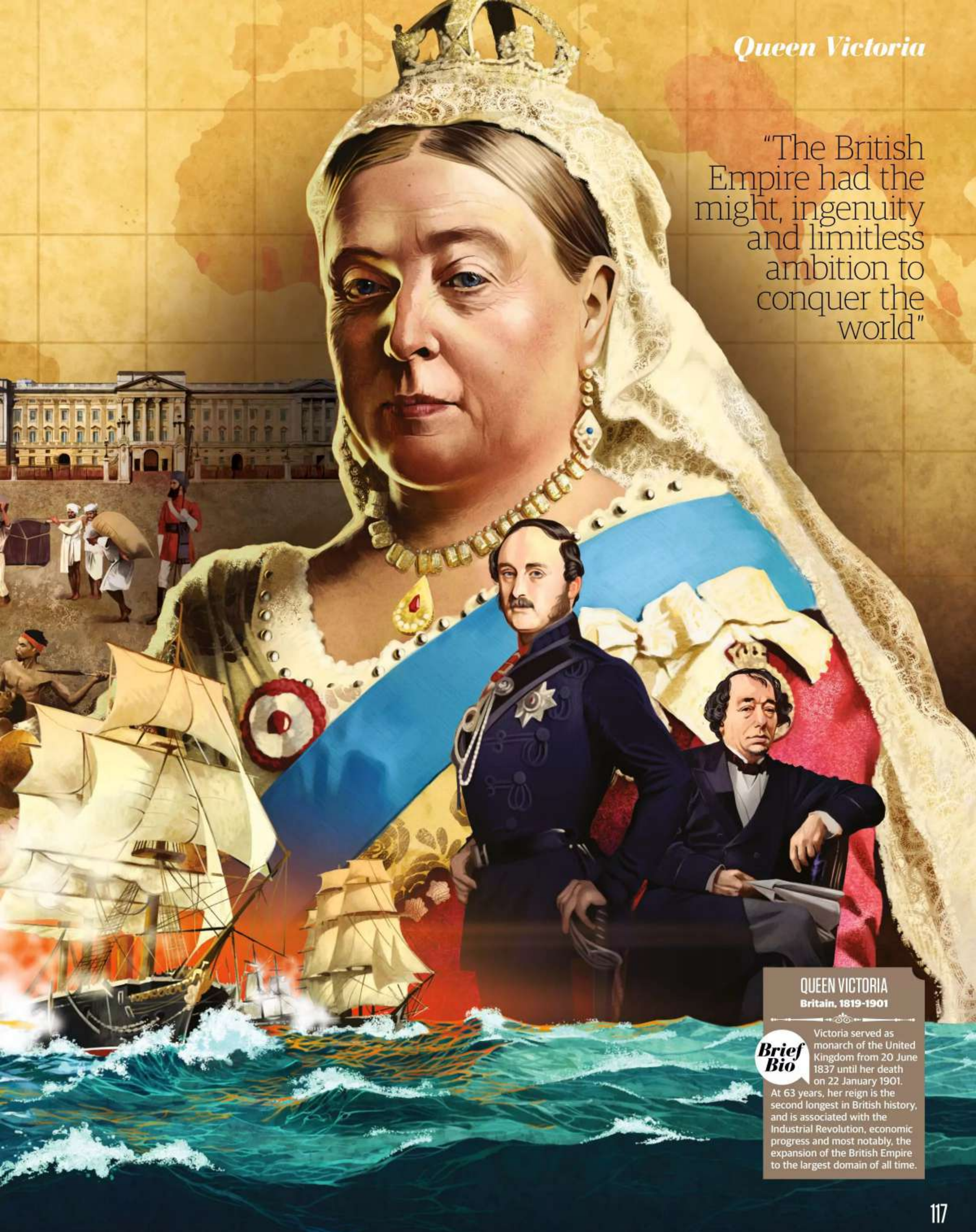
Queen Victoria

How a tiny island and its queen came to own an empire so large that the sun never set on it

The date was 22 January 1901 and the British Empire was the largest of any in human history, but the monarch who reigned over it would not live another day. As Queen Victoria lay dying in Osborne House on the Isle of Wight she looked back on a reign that spanned over 63 years. She had seen her empire grow from a collection of scattered isles, separated by vast plains of lands and insurmountable oceans, to the greatest the world had known. It had reached over India, plucked its riches and mounted it as the glimmering jewel in her crown. It had butchered its way mercilessly across Africa at the cost of thousands of British corpses and countless natives who had tried in vain to stand in its way. It was powered forward both by Christian values and colonial greed, so as Victoria drew her last breath, she left a world forever transformed by the empire she had built.

When a young Princess Victoria ascended the steps of Westminster Abbey on her coronation day, few would have foreseen the mighty empire she would eventually rule over. The British public were increasingly disenchanted with the monarchy and her grandfather, the mad king George III, had failed to protect British interest in the Americas, and her uncle George IV's terrible relations with his wife and reckless spending had tarnished the monarchy's prestige. At a mere 18 years and barely 150 centimetres (five feet) tall, Victoria hardly seemed a fitting patron for the vast ambitions of British expansion from the 17th century. But this blue-eyed, silvery-voiced lady possessed a stubborn will of iron and her reign would become the longest in British history until Elizabeth II surpassed her in 2015. Her ascension marked not the death of the British Empire, but the new dawn of a kingdom so massive that none could ever hope to challenge it.

The world was changing as Victoria took her place on the throne. The tiny, scattered rural villages of England were being abandoned en masse and the cities were transforming into sprawling metropolises. Great towering concrete chimneys rose from the ground and the whirr of machines sounded across the country – the age of steam had arrived. The Industrial Revolution



> "The British Empire had the might, ingenuity and limitless ambition to conquer the world"

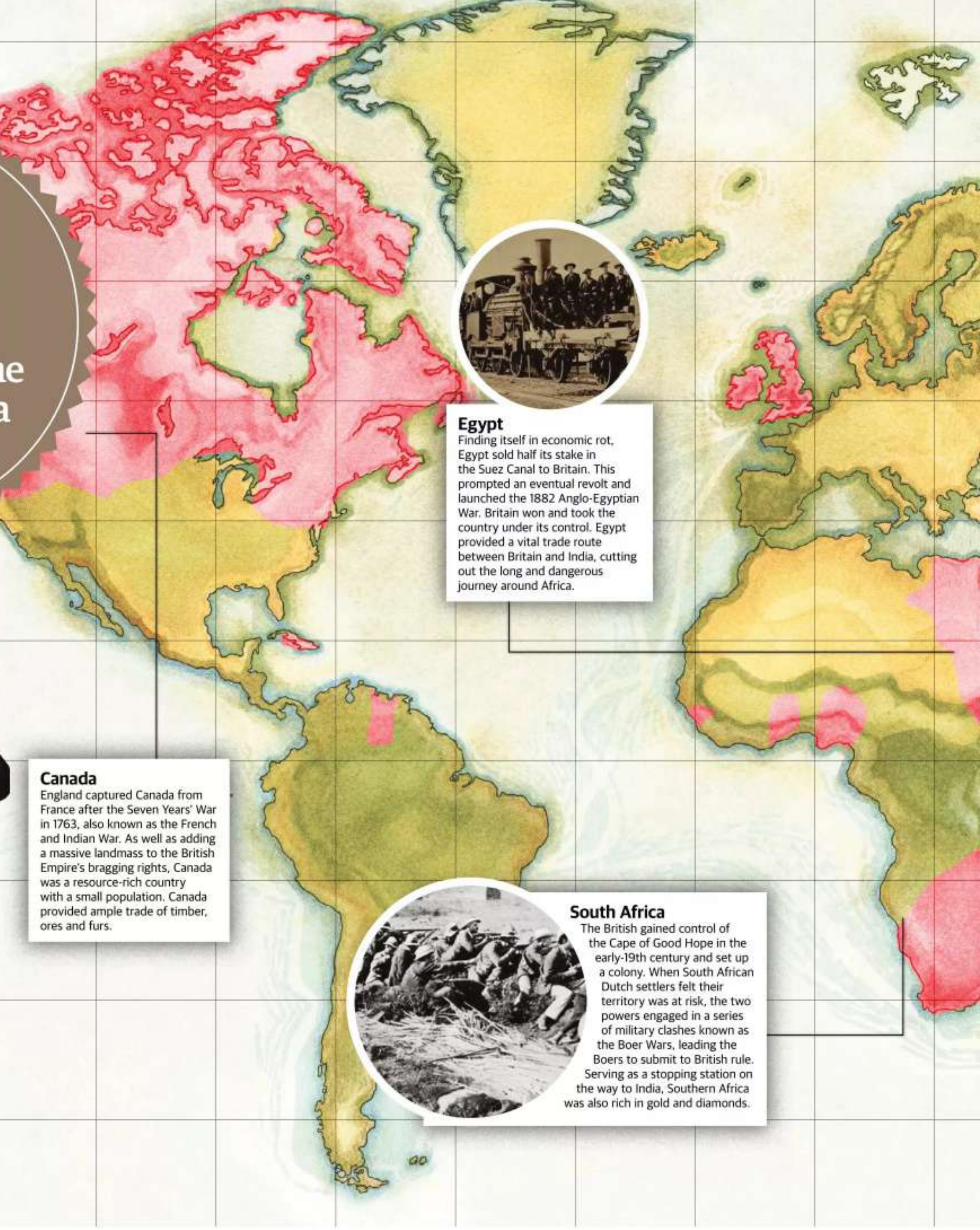
QUEEN VICTORIA

Britain, 1819-1901

Brief Bio Victoria served as monarch of the United Kingdom from 20 June 1837 until her death on 22 January 1901. At 63 years, her reign is the second longest in British history, and is associated with the Industrial Revolution, economic progress and most notably, the expansion of the British Empire to the largest domain of all time.

The World's Greatest Empire

How much of the world Britannia ruled by 1901



Egypt
Finding itself in economic rot, Egypt sold half its stake in the Suez Canal to Britain. This prompted an eventual revolt and launched the 1882 Anglo-Egyptian War. Britain won and took the country under its control. Egypt provided a vital trade route between Britain and India, cutting out the long and dangerous journey around Africa.

Canada
England captured Canada from France after the Seven Years' War in 1763, also known as the French and Indian War. As well as adding a massive landmass to the British Empire's bragging rights, Canada was a resource-rich country with a small population. Canada provided ample trade of timber, ores and furs.

South Africa
The British gained control of the Cape of Good Hope in the early-19th century and set up a colony. When South African Dutch settlers felt their territory was at risk, the two powers engaged in a series of military clashes known as the Boer Wars, leading the Boers to submit to British rule. Serving as a stopping station on the way to India, Southern Africa was also rich in gold and diamonds.

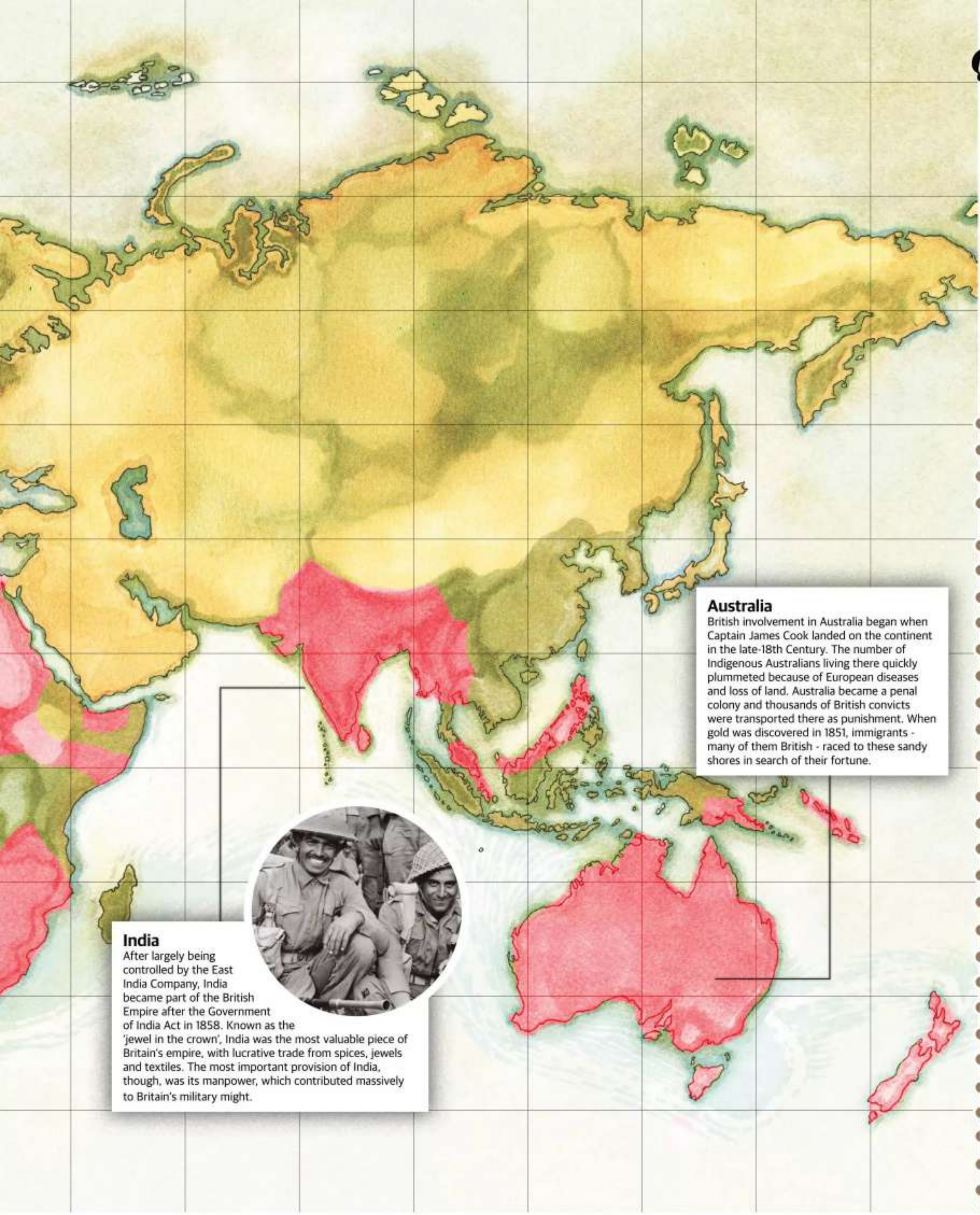
5 things you probably didn't know about Benjamin Disraeli

1. Born to Italian-Jewish parents, Disraeli was the first British prime minister with a Jewish heritage, though he was baptised as a Christian.
2. Disraeli pursued many early business ventures that failed, leaving him in crippling debt, leading to a nervous breakdown from which it took him years to recover.
3. He was mocked in Parliament when he made his maiden speech. Later he proclaimed that "the time will come when you will hear me."
4. Disraeli was a notorious flatterer and when asked by a colleague how to deal with Queen Victoria, he replied: "First of all, remember she is a woman."
5. He introduced much legislation that benefited the poor, such as the 1877 Artisans Dwelling Act that provided housing, as well as the Public Health Act the same year.

> "The loss of the love of her life changed not only herself as a person, but the fate of her empire"

changed Britain from a quaint maritime nation on the edge of Europe into a manufacturing colossus. Railways and steamships brought the British overseas territory closer to the mother country, opening up opportunities for trade and commerce that were previously unfathomable.

It was Albert, Victoria's beloved husband, who opened her and Britain's eyes to the ideas that went on to shape her empire. Fascinated by mechanisms and inventions, Albert organised The Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace - a temple to the ingenuity of the rapidly developing modern world. Inventions from around the world were displayed, but this was Britain's show, first and foremost. The symbols of British might, which occupied half of the entire display space, served as clear examples



Australia
British involvement in Australia began when Captain James Cook landed on the continent in the late-18th Century. The number of Indigenous Australians living there quickly plummeted because of European diseases and loss of land. Australia became a penal colony and thousands of British convicts were transported there as punishment. When gold was discovered in 1851, immigrants - many of them British - raced to these sandy shores in search of their fortune.

India
After largely being controlled by the East India Company, India became part of the British Empire after the Government of India Act in 1858. Known as the 'jewel in the crown', India was the most valuable piece of Britain's empire, with lucrative trade from spices, jewels and textiles. The most important provision of India, though, was its manpower, which contributed massively to Britain's military might.

Timeline of Conquest

How Victoria's British Empire became the world's biggest

- 1838 PITCAIRN ISLANDS
- 1842 HONG KONG
- 1848 INDIA
- 1853 TRUCIAL OMAN (TRINIDAD & TOBAGO)
- 1857 ADEN (YEMEN)
- 1862 BRITISH HONDURAS (BELIZE)
- 1868 BECHUANANLAND (BOTSWANA)
- 1874 FIJI
- 1878 CYPRUS
- 1878 SOUTH WEST AFRICA (NAMIBIA)
- 1881 NORTH BORNEO (SABAH)
- 1884 BASUTOLAND (LESOTHO)
- 1884 BRITISH SOMALILAND (SOMALILAND)
- 1884 PAPUA NEW GUINEA
- 1885 NIGERIA
- 1885 KENYA
- 1887 MALDIVE ISLANDS
- 1888 BRITISH EAST AFRICA (KENYA)
- 1888 BRUNEI
- 1888 COOK ISLANDS (NZ ASSOC)
- 1888 GAMBIA
- 1888 SARAWAK (MALAYSIA)
- 1889 RHODESIA (ZIMBABWE)
- 1889 TRINIDAD (TRINIDAD & TOBAGO)
- 1890 TANGANYIKA (TANZANIA)
- 1891 MALAWI
- 1894 UGANDA
- 1898 SUDAN
- 1899 KUWAIT

of what the British Empire was capable of and fostered the ideas of national supremacy in the eyes of Victoria, the government and the majority of the British population. The Great Exhibition proved that far from the crumbling remains of a once-powerful nation, the British Empire had the might, ingenuity and limitless ambition to conquer the world.

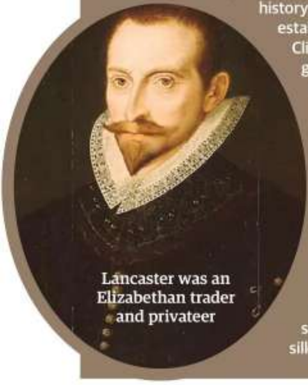
The opportunity to pave the road for this empire arose in 1857 with the Indian Mutiny. India had been ruled by a private entity - the East India Company - from 1757. The rebellion manifested the discontent felt by the Indian people for the blatant disrespect of their beliefs and customs. The company showed disregard for the Indian caste system and issued new cartridges greased with cow and pig fat that had to be opened with the mouth, highly offensive to Muslim and Hindu soldiers. These actions opened the eyes of the Indian people to the daily injustice they were being subjected to, and unrest snowballed into mass riots and an uprising. Although the mutiny was eventually quelled, the rebellion led to the dissolution of the company, the passing of power to the British state and the creation of what Victoria would call the jewel in her crown - the British Indian Empire.

Queen Victoria welcomed the country to her empire in a lavish ceremony, promising that Indian native customs and religions would be respected and that she would "draw a veil over the sad and bloody past." She presented herself as a maternal figure and a crusader for peace, justice and honest government - ideals largely inspired by her husband. Albert had instilled in her mind the vision of King Arthur's Camelot, an empire ruled not by tyranny but by justice, where the strong serve the weak, where good triumphs over evil, bringing not oppression and bloodshed, but trade, education and welfare. His influence on Victoria was immense and when on 14 December 1861 he died of suspected typhoid fever, the empire veered into an entirely new direction.

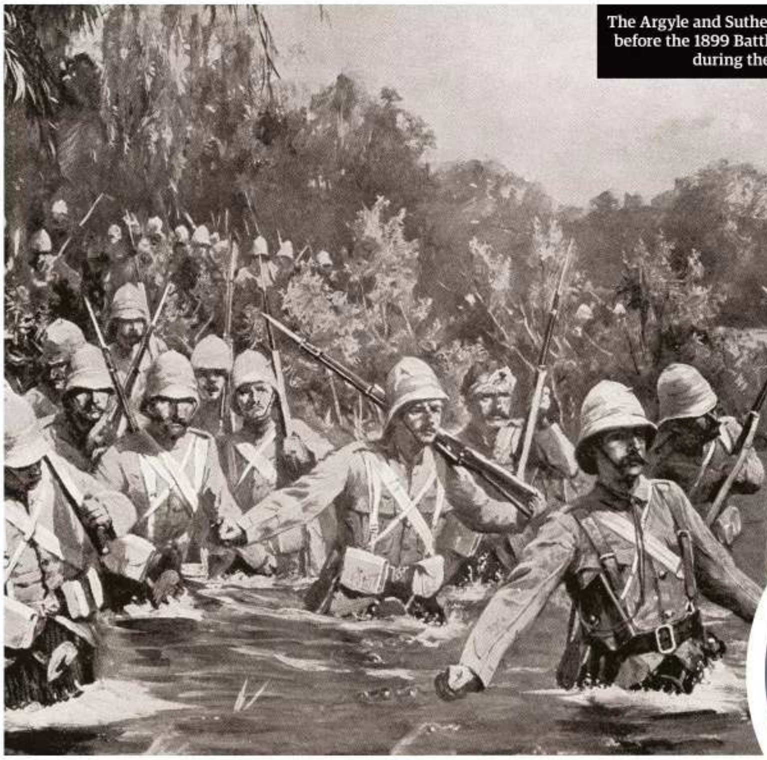
When Albert drew his last breath in the blue room at Windsor Castle the queen was inconsolable; the loss of the love of her life changed not only herself as a person, but the fate of her

What was the East India Company?

Emerging from humble beginnings, the East India Company began as a simple enterprise of London businessmen who wanted to make money from importing spices. The company was granted a royal charter by Queen Elizabeth I in 1600, and in 1601 James Lancaster led its first voyage. The company set up trade outposts in Indian settlements that slowly developed into commercial towns. Steadily increasing its territory, the company claimed vital trading ports from Aden to Penang. As its control extended, the company became the most powerful private company in history, with its own army established by Robert Clive, the first British governor of Bengal. With its great military power behind it, the company controlled India with a combination of direct rule and alliances with Indian princes. The East India Company eventually accounted for half the world's trade and specialised in cotton, silk, tea and opium.



Lancaster was an Elizabethan trader and privateer

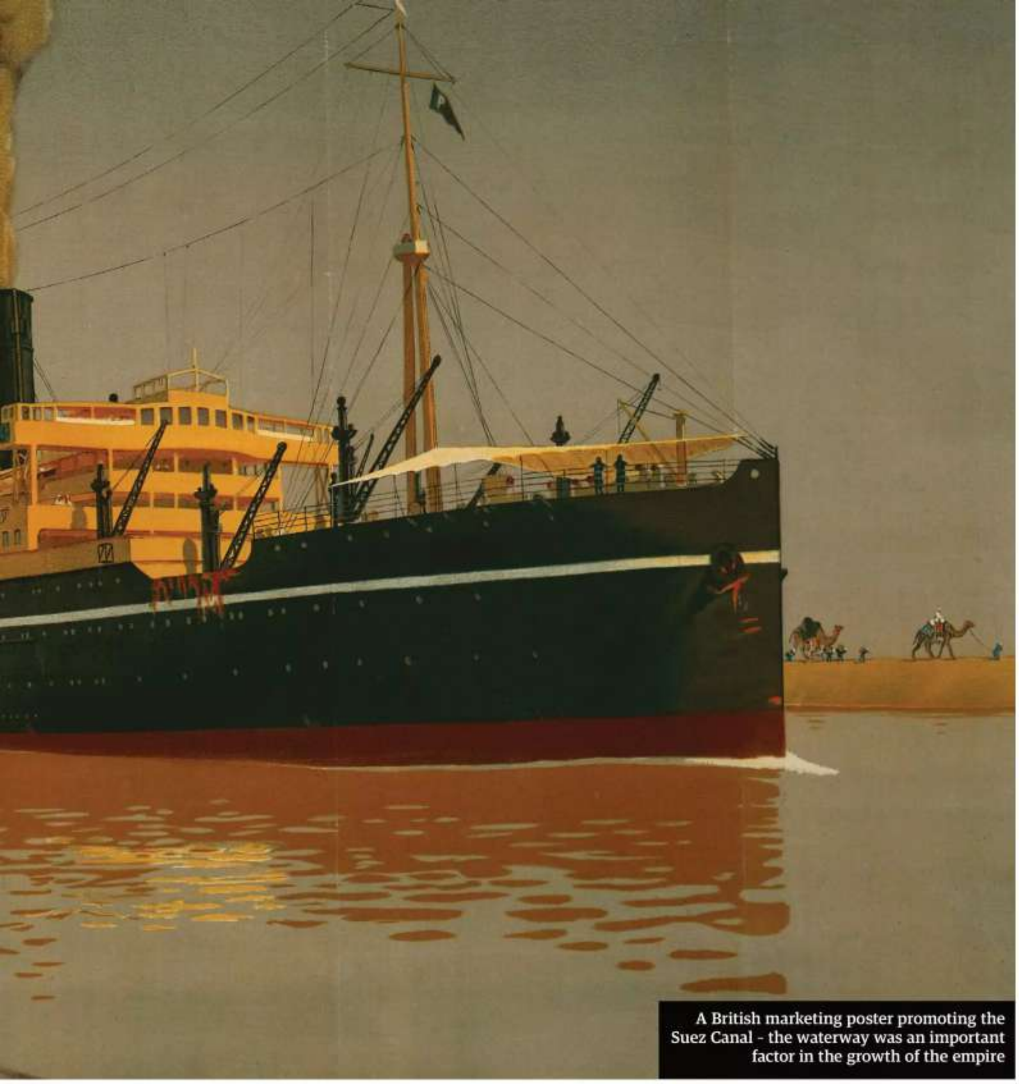


The Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders before the 1899 Battle of Modder River during the Second Boer War

empire. As she donned the mourning clothes she would wear until her own death, she drew a veil over Albert's vision and pursued a different path for her kingdom - one of world domination.

An emerging figure in Parliament would come to foster her views - Benjamin Disraeli. The ambitious and rebellious leader of the Conservatives was led by a passion for imperial power and glory. Inspired by tales of imperial adventures, Disraeli believed Britain should pursue an empire of power and prestige. His most direct political opponent represented everything Albert dreamed the empire could be. William Gladstone, the leader of the Liberals, thought the empire should serve a high moral purpose, to follow not a path of conquest but one of commerce, sharing their moral vision with the world.

These two fiery and driven men fought over these opposing visions in Parliament as Victoria continued to mourn. Without Albert she felt incompetent and unable to face the immense duty that her role dictated. With her strong conservative views she found Gladstone and his liberal reforms dangerous and unpredictable. Disraeli,



A British marketing poster promoting the Suez Canal - the waterway was an important factor in the growth of the empire

"The Industrial Revolution changed Britain from a quaint maritime nation into a manufacturing giant"

suave, coy and dripping with forthright confidence, enchanted the lonely queen. With his constant flattery and sharp wit, Disraeli reignited her interest in politics and captivated her, as Albert had done so previously, with his vision of just how mighty the empire could be. However, Gladstone's liberal vision and Albert's quest for Camelot had not completely faded. The British people, led by strong Protestant beliefs Victoria herself had instilled in them, felt it was Britain's role - their duty even - to civilise people around the world. They believed the British cause was to export not only trade, but also gospel values of morality and justice.

It was in pursuit of this lofty goal that many missionaries turned their attention to Africa. Little was known of the 'Dark Continent', but the common perception was that it was a place of pagan worship ravaged by tribal wars. One missionary in particular would capture the attention of the British nation. Tall, handsome and heroic, David Livingstone embodied everything the British believed their nation to represent. A medical missionary, Livingstone's daring adventures around the continent were followed by a captivated British public. Fighting vicious beasts, battling through dense jungles and suffering a multitude of illnesses, Livingstone was the heroic face of the empire's Christian ideals.

Livingstone's horrific confrontation with African chain gangs was to drive the British cause of expansion. The slavery rife in Africa was abhorrent to Livingstone and the British public, as the practice had been abolished across the empire in 1833. The queen and government united behind Livingstone's quest to find a suitable trade route, hoping that by doing so, the African people would find ways to make a living that wasn't built on the backs of slaves. Livingstone's journey was a failure and he returned to scathing criticism - something the imperialist Disraeli leapt on with glee. His flattery of Victoria had completely won her over and the monarchy and government became united in pursuit of one goal - the expansion of the empire.

The perfect opportunity to begin this new empire emerged as another nation struggled to survive. The Egyptian ruler, Isma'il Pasha, was

How Queen Victoria came to rule the word

Dominance of the seas

Britain employed a 'two-power standard' in 1889 which called for the Royal Navy to maintain a force at least equal to the combined strength of the next two largest navies in the world. This policy ensured British dominance of the seas with a string of naval bases encompassing the whole world. The pure size and strength of the navy served its purpose - deterring any would be competitors and confirming its position as ruler of the waves.

The Industrial Revolution

Britain was the first nation to harness the power of steam and the first to undergo an industrial revolution. This resulted in mass production of low-cost goods to trade around the world. It also gave Britain's military an array of resources like rifles, steamships and trains, equipping it to defeat any possible enemies. Medical advances also allowed British explorers to penetrate remote areas without fear of tropical diseases.

The quest to spread democracy

Land grabbing aside, the British Empire was led by a strong Protestant desire to improve the world. Britain saw itself as an agent of civilisation - one they wanted to spread worldwide, bringing peace, order and stability. This belief that they were doing genuine good led men like David Livingstone to travel to Africa to spread the word of God, and with it, the British Empire.

Taking advantage of the competition

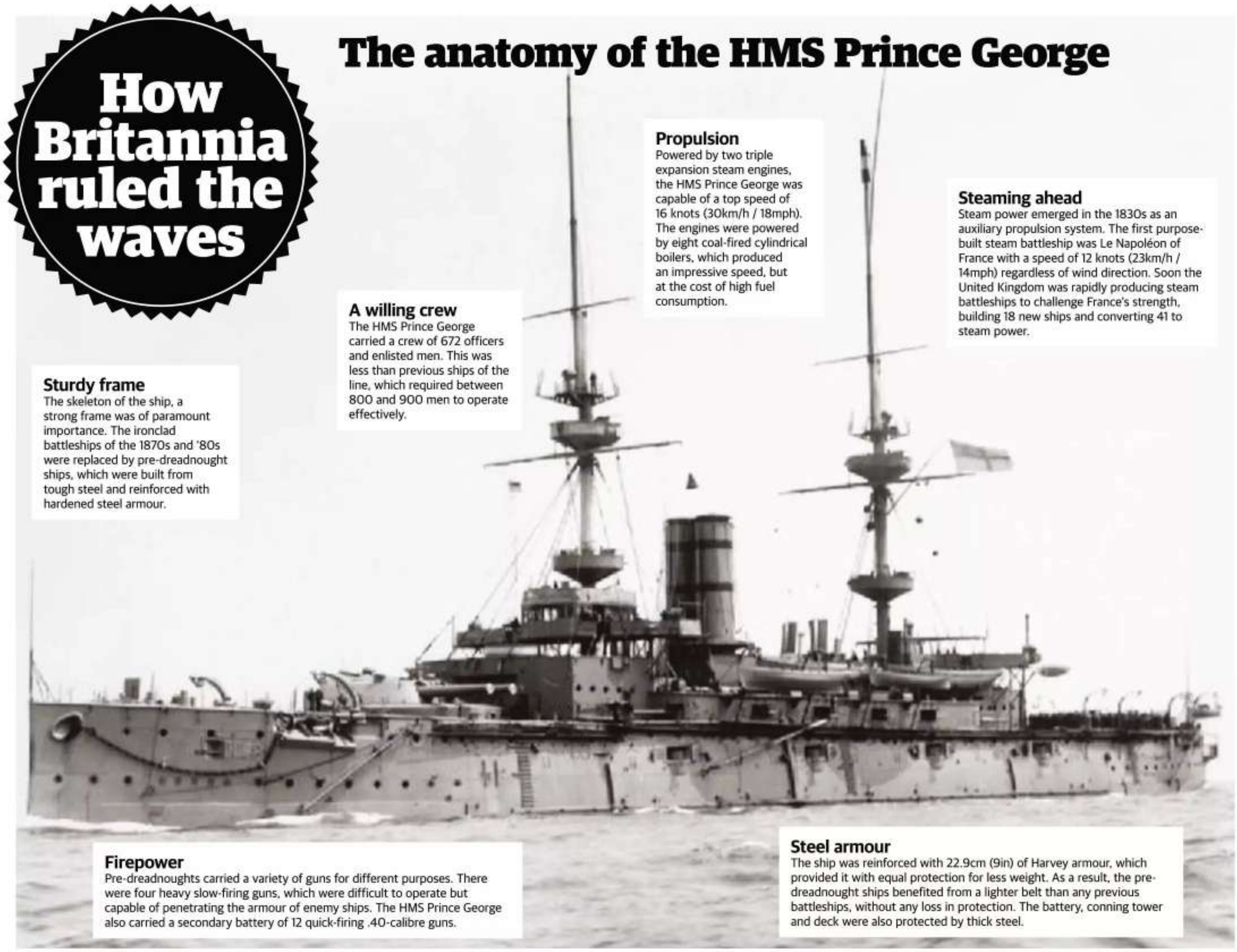
As major powers of the world such as Spain, France, the Netherlands and the Ottomans were losing power, the British began to peak in strength. Britain was able to take advantage of the European wars that had weakened other nations as it enjoyed a period of relative peace, allowing uninterrupted expansion of its empire. Any threats that did emerge, such as Russia, just gave Britain new zeal to cement its powerful hold on the world.

Strong leadership

Britain was ruled by a single monarch throughout most of the 19th century - Queen Victoria. The record-breaking length of her reign brought a sense of stability and contributed to the unconquerable notion of the British Empire. Although Victoria did involve herself in government, her role was symbolic rather than one of direct power, which ensured stability of British politics. While other nations were dealing with socialist movements, Britain enjoyed a long period of relative domestic peace.

How Britannia ruled the waves

The anatomy of the HMS Prince George



Propulsion
Powered by two triple expansion steam engines, the HMS Prince George was capable of a top speed of 16 knots (30km/h / 18mph). The engines were powered by eight coal-fired cylindrical boilers, which produced an impressive speed, but at the cost of high fuel consumption.

Steaming ahead
Steam power emerged in the 1830s as an auxiliary propulsion system. The first purpose-built steam battleship was Le Napoléon of France with a speed of 12 knots (23km/h / 14mph) regardless of wind direction. Soon the United Kingdom was rapidly producing steam battleships to challenge France's strength, building 18 new ships and converting 41 to steam power.

A willing crew
The HMS Prince George carried a crew of 672 officers and enlisted men. This was less than previous ships of the line, which required between 800 and 900 men to operate effectively.

Sturdy frame
The skeleton of the ship, a strong frame was of paramount importance. The ironclad battleships of the 1870s and '80s were replaced by pre-dreadnought ships, which were built from tough steel and reinforced with hardened steel armour.

Firepower
Pre-dreadnoughts carried a variety of guns for different purposes. There were four heavy slow-firing guns, which were difficult to operate but capable of penetrating the armour of enemy ships. The HMS Prince George also carried a secondary battery of 12 quick-firing .40-calibre guns.

Steel armour
The ship was reinforced with 22.9cm (9in) of Harvey armour, which provided it with equal protection for less weight. As a result, the pre-dreadnought ships benefited from a lighter belt than any previous battleships, without any loss in protection. The battery, conning tower and deck were also protected by thick steel.

confronted with crippling debts after reckless spending on lavish ceremonies and a costly war with Ethiopia. In an act of desperation he made an offer to sell to the British Egypt's shares in the Suez Canal. The canal was more than a mere trading port; it opened up a short route to India across Egypt and down the Red Sea, cutting out the lengthy journey around Africa. The Egyptian ruler's offer would give the British controlling influence over the jugular of the empire, so Disraeli urged Victoria to accept. She immediately did and the Suez Canal fell into British hands.

With control of India, Britain was already the most powerful nation on Earth and three-quarters of the world's trade was transported in British ships, but this control was being threatened. The Russian Empire had been steadily expanding east and south and was getting uncomfortably close to Victoria's prized jewel - India. The Middle East was largely controlled by the Turks, but they were busy dealing with violent rebellions. The Turkish treatment of their Christian subjects was shocking and atrocious, but as Russia backed the rebels the British had no option but to support the Turks. The British public, to whom Russia stood for everything Britain opposed - ignorance, slavery and subjugation - largely supported this choice. Facing the prospect of imminent war with the strongest nation on the planet, Russia agreed to peace talks and thanks in part to the charisma and negotiation skills of Disraeli, agreed to stop their advance on the Middle East.

Imperial spirit rushed through the public as the might of British muscle flexed and proved itself again. As the empire continued its steady expansion across the continent it came face to face with the most powerful African nation - the Zulus. The British, with a bloated ego, underestimated the strength of their spear-wielding enemies and suffered a crushing initial defeat. In the end it took 16,000 British reinforcements to prise the Zulus' independence from their grip. Expecting to return to a wave of praise for their daring exploits, the victorious army were surprised to discover that British opinions were changing once again.

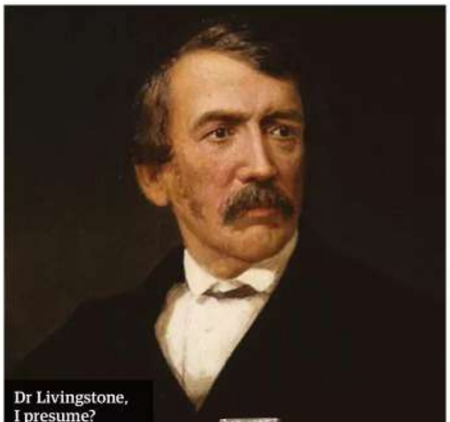
Gladstone, the "half-mad firebrand", as Victoria dubbed him, preached his outraged opinions about the mass slaughter of Zulus and rampant destruction of their homes. Victoria was outraged but the public sided with Gladstone and, much to the queen's dismay, the power of the government switched hands once more. Liberal leader or not, all of Europe's attention was firmly fixed on Africa as nations began a scramble to establish colonies there. In amongst this mad rush to establish new territory by European powers, it was arguably one man's actions that would determine the ultimate fate of Victoria's empire.

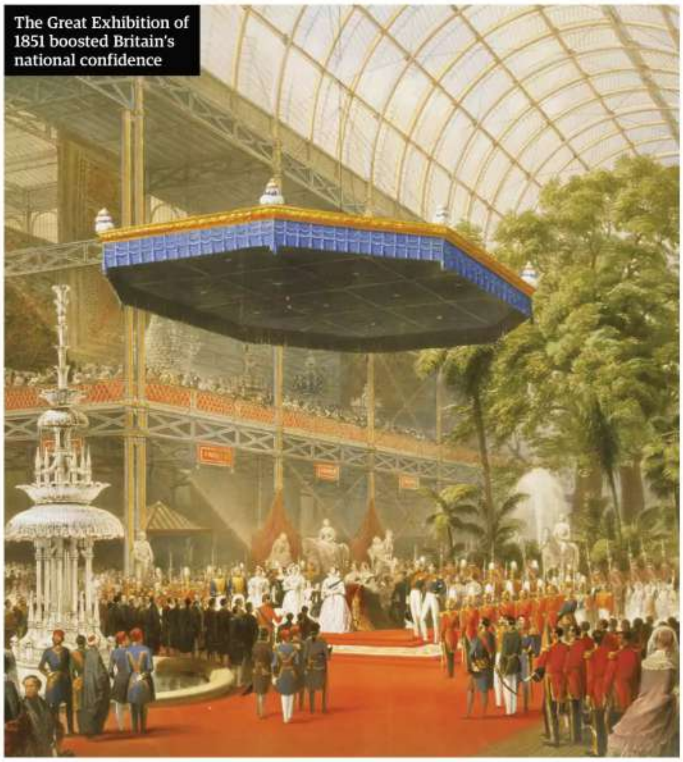
Led by Muhammad Ahmed, revolution was tearing through the Sudan as tribes rose against their corrupt rulers. As this holy war drew uncomfortably close to the Suez Canal, Victoria urged Gladstone to utilise the British troops

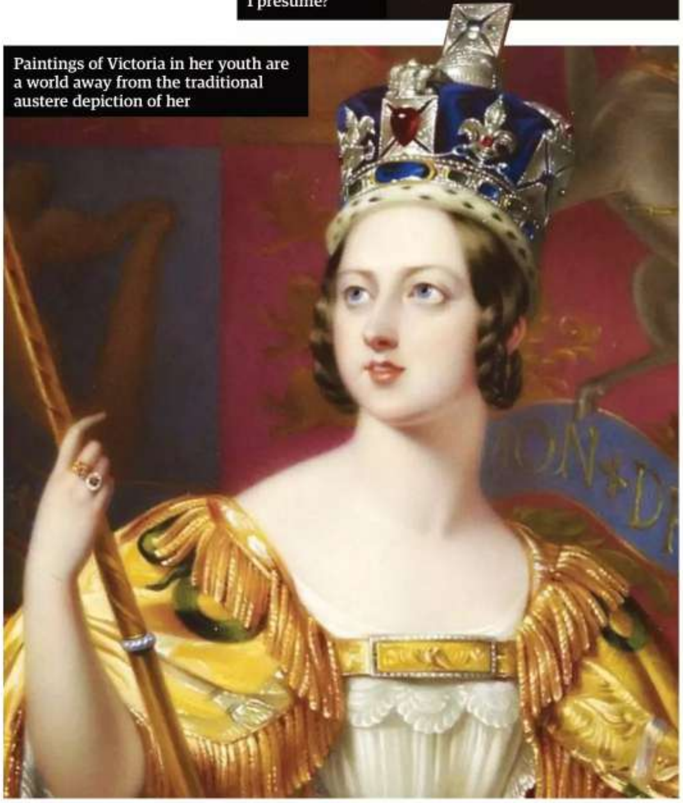
"They believed the British cause was to export not only trade, but also gospel values of morality and justice"

stationed there to defend it. The liberal leader refused. In order to buy time he sent one man, General Charles Gordon, to secure the evacuation of loyal civilians and soldiers.

Like Livingstone, Gordon was a national hero. He was brave, dashing, popular and his decorated military career had painted him in the eyes of the British public as a gleaming knight of old. Despite these qualities, Gordon was also a wild and unpredictable character. When he reached the Sudan he was horrified by the slavery that was rife in the region and he decided to face the Mahdi in battle. With limited forces, Gordon soon found himself besieged and utterly overwhelmed in the city of Khartoum. His appeals for aid, to the adoring public's outrage, fell on deaf ears in the government. It took more than eight months of public fury to finally force Gladstone's hand, but it was too late - Gordon, the nation's hero of Christianity, was dead.


Dr Livingstone, I presume?


The Great Exhibition of 1851 boosted Britain's national confidence


Paintings of Victoria in her youth are a world away from the traditional austere depiction of her

Main competitors

Three countries that were battling with Britain for territory

Russia

As England expanded its territory, so did Russia. For a hundred years Russia expanded east and south, narrowing the gap between the British and Russian Empires in Central Asia. Britain soon became obsessed with protecting India which was a rich source of goods and manpower. The competition for dominance of the states that separated them - Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet - became commonly known as The Great Game. The looming, but unlikely, threat of Russia's attack led Britain into largely unnecessary military involvement in Afghanistan and Tibet.

Germany

From 1850 onward, Germany began to industrialise at an astonishing rate, transforming from a rural nation to a heavily urban one. In the space of a decade Germany's navy grew massively and became the only one able to challenge the British. Although the German Empire of the late-19th century consisted of only a few small colonies, the newly unified state slowly moved toward colonial expansion in Asia and the Pacific. As Wilhelm II rose to power, his aggressive policies in achieving a 'place in the sun' similar to Britain was one of the factors that would lead to WWI.

France

Britain's age-old rival France was still licking its wounds after the loss of most of its imperial colonies in the early part of the 19th century. However, French leaders began a mission to restore its prestige in 1850, seeking to claim land in North and West Africa as well as in Southeast Asia. After the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War, it still continued with zeal to expand its empire, acquiring land in China and all over Africa. Unlike most of its rivals, France would continue expanding after WWI, well into the 1930s.

Eye-watering empire facts

458 million people ruled over

23% of the world's surface was ruled by Britain

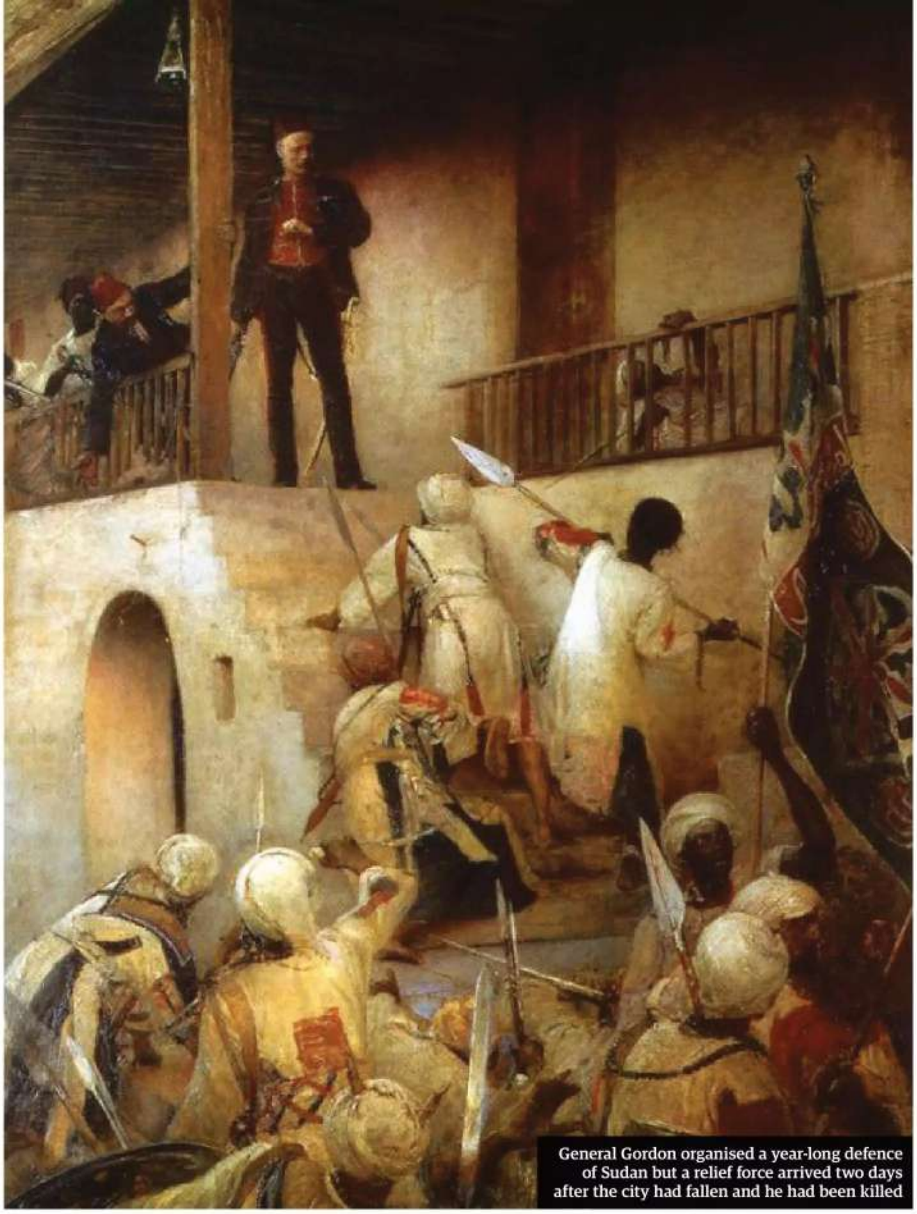
13.01 million square miles of land belonged to the empire

113 ships in the Royal Navy

63 years & 21 days the length of Victoria's reign

165,000 convicts sent to Australia

7,010,000 total goods shipped by Britain in one year (1881)



General Gordon organised a year-long defence of Sudan but a relief force arrived two days after the city had fallen and he had been killed

> "The monarchy and government became united in pursuit of one goal - the expansion of the empire"

In an instance the liberal vision was shattered, Gladstone was voted out and his moral influence departed with him. The renewed crusading spirit of British imperialism found its poster boy in a man who would lead the empire down a dark and dangerous path. Moving from England to Africa to work on a cotton farm, Cecil John Rhodes had become outrageously wealthy from the diamond rush, but he wanted more - the whole of Africa. Driven by greed and lust for power, Rhodes wished to create a British colony across Africa, not for the betterment of its people or to spread Christian values, but for profit and business.

Using the tenacity and cunning that had elevated him to success, Rhodes tricked and butchered his way across the continent with the British government backing him every bloody step of the way. Rhodes made it his purpose to make the world English and famously said: "If there be a God, I think that what he would like me to do is paint as much of the map of Africa British Red as possible." His path of colonial greed led Britain head-first into a conflict now known as the Boer Wars.

Gold had been found in Transvaal in northern South Africa and Rhodes worried that this would prompt an alliance with the Germans, thus cutting off his route to the north of the continent. Rhodes planned an uprising to overthrow the Boer leaders, but it did not go as planned - far from the naked, spear-wielding foes he had previously conquered, the Boers had guns, and they fought back hard with skill and courage.

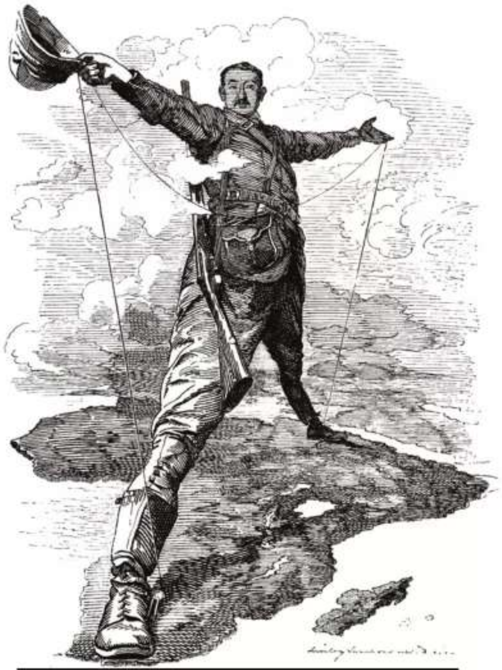
Outrage tore across Europe against what was seen as an unprovoked attack on an independent state, but not in Britain. Fully convinced of their noble mission, the British people believed the Boers

"As more British bodies piled up, British confidence in their own unconquerable might began to wane in Africa"

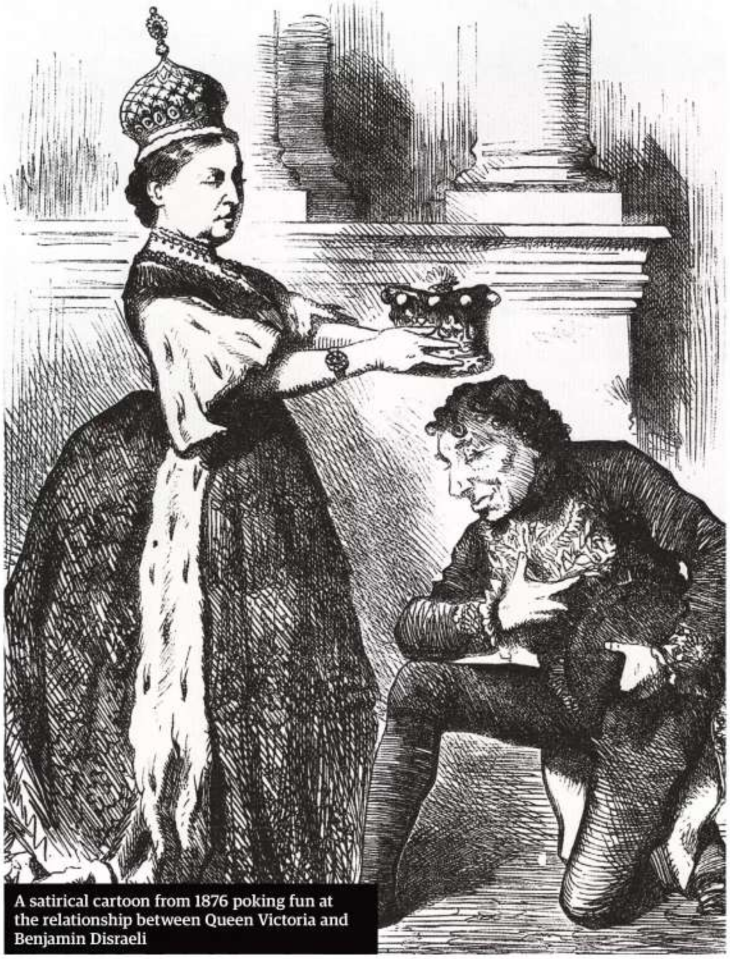
to be vicious and uncompromising. More soldiers poured into the region into a war they believed would be short and glorious, but as more British bodies piled up - Victoria's own grandson among them - British confidence began to wane.

As British reinforcements continued to flood into the territory the tide slowly began to turn. Rhodes had managed to squeeze a win from the jaws of defeat and the Boer territories became British colonies. The empire had grown, but at a cost. Rhodes' controversial actions during the war - including forming what would come to be known as the first concentration camps - had been a step too far for the British public. What had begun as a noble quest of Christianity had transformed into a greedy and brutal scramble for power. When Rhodes died his merciless version of imperialism was buried with him in the dry African dirt.

When Victoria passed away she was finally rid of the black mourning clothes she had worn for 40 years and was dressed entirely in white. Spring flowers were scattered around her body and her wedding veil was placed on her head as she prepared to reunite with the dearest love of her life. She was, however, leaving another behind; the Empire she had mothered now stretched across the globe with large swathes still coloured in the pink of British rule. As the sun set on the quiet room in which she lay in Osborne House, it was rising on the bustling spice markets of India, and soon the vast plains of British land in Africa would be bathed in warm golden light. Victoria had died, but the legacy she left behind continued to expand over the face of the planet. Even without their driver, the cogs of the British Empire whirred steadily on for another half century at least.



1892 caricature of Cecil Rhodes, after he announced plans for a telegraph line and railroad from Cape Town to Cairo



A satirical cartoon from 1876 poking fun at the relationship between Queen Victoria and Benjamin Disraeli

An official photograph of Victoria, taken in 1893

1850 – 1875

Empress Dowager Cixi

From concubine to conqueror, was China's last empress a shrewd moderniser or a pivotal player in imperial collapse?

From the rumour mills of Medieval courts to modern-day gossip magazines, humanity has throughout its history been fixated with rumour and hearsay, and many historians would argue there are few leaders in Chinese history who have fallen prey to such intense speculation as Empress Dowager Cixi.

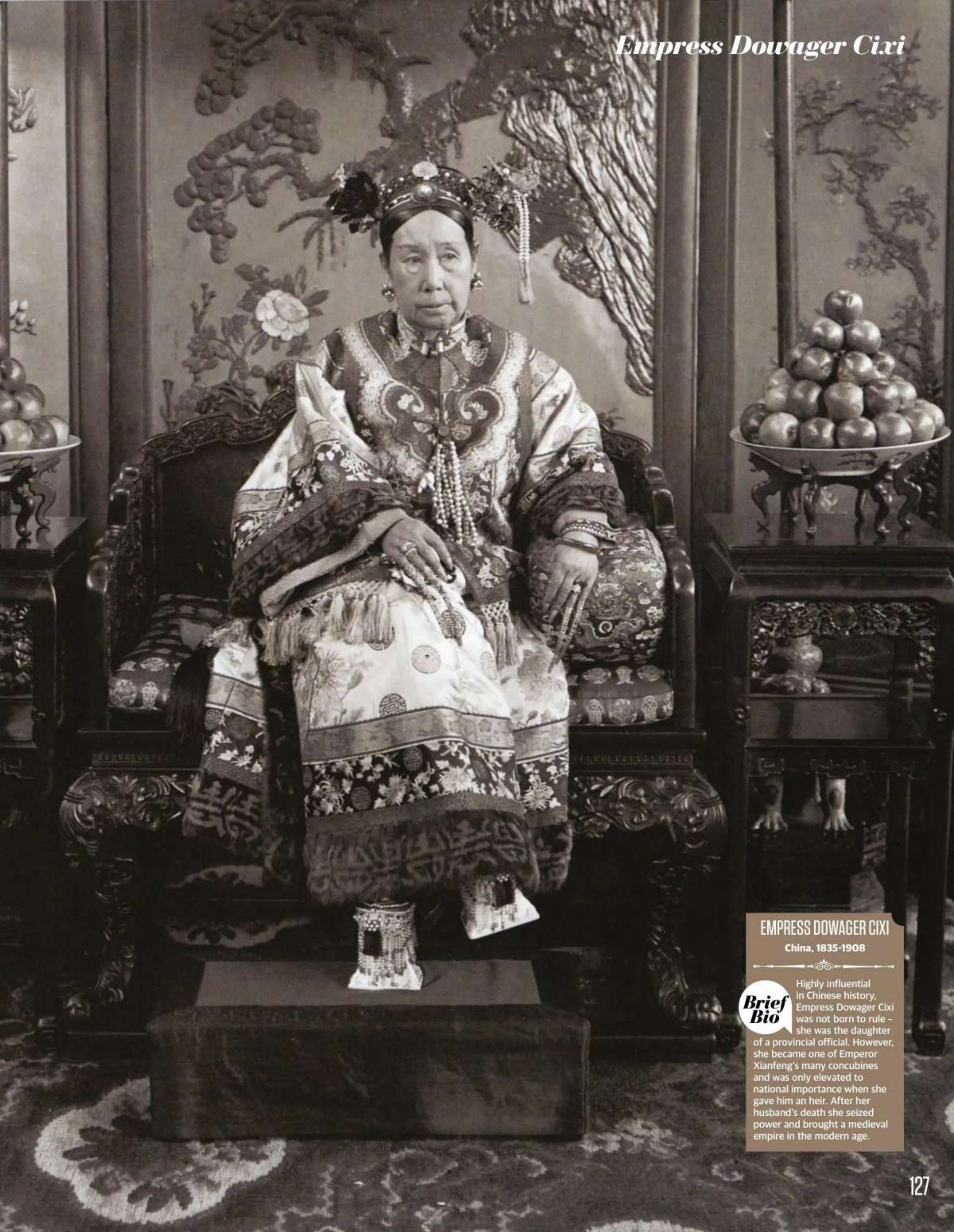
Born in the winter of 1835 when the Chinese empire was still strong, Cixi was the daughter of an ordinary official from the Manchu Yehenara clan. She was well educated and able to read and write - an unusual skill for Manchu women of the time - and in 1851, she participated in the selection of consorts for the Xianfeng Emperor alongside 60 other candidates.

> Cixi was chosen by the then-Empress Dowager to enter the Forbidden City as a fourth-rank concubine for her son

Contrary to modern-day interpretations of the Chinese concubine tradition, being chosen as a royal consort was a huge honour, and Cixi, one of the few candidates chosen, was placed in the sixth rank of the emperor's nocturnal companions, rising to fifth rank in just a few years.

Thanks to her ability to read and write Chinese, Cixi had many opportunities to help the emperor with daily government business. As the emperor aged, he'd ask Cixi to read palace memorials and write down his wishes. This meant Cixi quickly became well informed about state affairs and benefited from a valuable lesson in the art of governance under the ailing emperor's tutelage. This already put her in an advantageous position, but her starring role in Chinese history was cemented when she gave birth to Zaichun, the Xianfeng

Empress Dowager Cixi

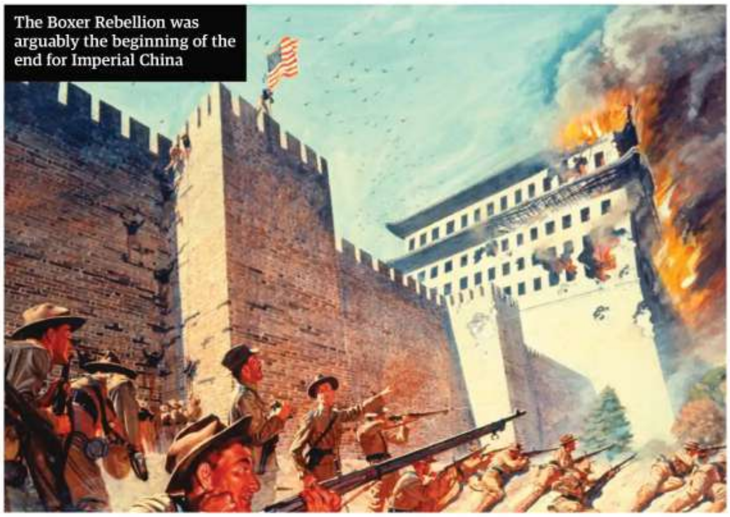


EMPRESS DOWAGER CIXI

China, 1835-1908

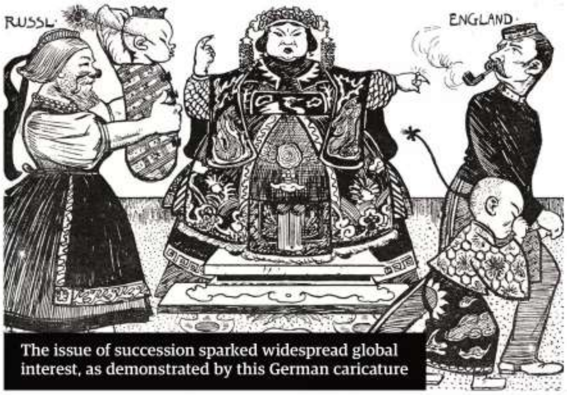
Brief Bio

Highly influential in Chinese history, Empress Dowager Cixi was not born to rule – she was the daughter of a provincial official. However, she became one of Emperor Xianfeng's many concubines and was only elevated to national importance when she gave him an heir. After her husband's death she seized power and brought a medieval empire in the modern age.



The Boxer Rebellion was arguably the beginning of the end for Imperial China

Prince Gong was a pivotal player in Cixi's rise to rule



The issue of succession sparked widespread global interest, as demonstrated by this German caricature

Emperor's only surviving son, in 1856. By Zaichun's first birthday, Cixi was elevated to the third rank of consorts, putting her second only to the Empress Ci'an within the Xianfeng Emperor's household.

In September 1860, tension erupted between Britain, France and China, and troops attacked Beijing, destroying the Imperial Summer Palace. It's said that on hearing this news, the Xianfeng Emperor - who had fled the city with his royal household - fell into a deep depression and, turning to alcohol and drugs, never recovered. He died in 1861 having named eight regents for his five-year-old son, the new emperor, and expressing his hope that Ci'an and Cixi would continue to play a pivotal role in the boy's royal career. While historians largely agree that Xianfeng never intended Cixi to wield direct political power, his passing marked the beginning of the end for Chinese Imperialism, and Cixi, as the new emperor's politically shrewd mother, was at the helm.

However, as the emperor's mother, Cixi's position had no power attached to it, so it was necessary for her to ally herself with other strong figures. Cixi had formed a close friendship with the late emperor's wife Ci'an, and suggested to her that the pair become co-reigning empresses with powers surpassing the eight regents. The two women enjoyed a harmonious partnership; Ci'an had little interest in politics and preferred to take care of household matters, leaving Cixi free to rule as she saw fit. But the eight regents did not take kindly to Cixi's interference in politics, and constant confrontation with the empress dowagers meant Ci'an frequently refused to attend court audiences, leaving Cixi to fend for herself - no small feat as, because she was a woman, she was forced to govern from behind a screen, battling to make herself heard amid a sea of male voices.

"In a move that further demonstrated her apparent grace and benevolence, Cixi refused to have the regents' family members killed"

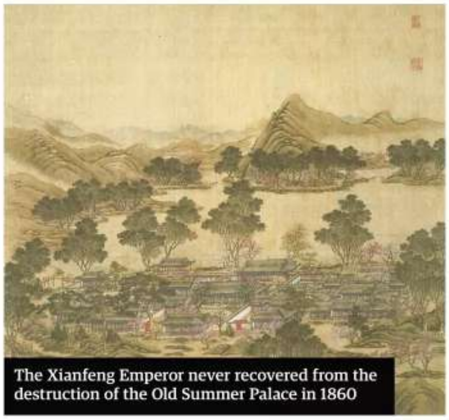
Ever the shrewd political player, Cixi began to assemble support from talented ministers and soldiers who had great ambitions but had been ostracised by the regents for political or personal reasons. Two individuals, Prince Gong and Prince Chun, the late emperor's sixth and seventh brothers, would go on to play a pivotal role in Cixi's story.

With Prince Gong's help, Cixi brought about a number of charges against the regents, deeming them 'incompetent' for the way they handled the invasion of Beijing that ultimately led to the Xianfeng Emperor's death. Three of the regents were executed, and in a move that further demonstrated her apparent grace and benevolence, Cixi refused to have the regents' family members killed, as would have been tradition. In a single stroke - known as the Xinyou Coup - Cixi had removed her challengers and emerged as a merciful yet powerful ruler.

In the following years, Cixi turned her attention to cleaning up national bureaucracies, which had become infested with corruption, and even had two prominent officials executed to serve as an example to others. Worryingly for Cixi, a number of reports accused her trusted confidant Prince Gong of corruption and so, fearing his growing influence, the prince was dismissed from his offices and appointments, but allowed to keep his status

Empress Dowager Cixi's final resting place is one of the most impressive imperial tombs of China

This opulent ceremonial headdress was likely worn by the Empress Dowager Cixi



The Xianfeng Emperor never recovered from the destruction of the Old Summer Palace in 1860

as nobility. The move once again highlighted Cixi's refusal to give up absolute power to anyone, even one of her most important friends - and, as it would soon emerge, even her son, the rightful emperor of China.

In 1872, the Tongzhi Emperor turned 17, and under the guidance of Ci'an, married the Jiashun Empress. Both her ancestry and zodiac symbol of tiger were cause for concern for the superstitious Cixi. Unhappy with the union, Cixi ordered the couple to separate. The Tongzhi Emperor, who proved to be an incompetent ruler anyway, fell into a deep despair and turned to a life of debauchery and hedonism outside the Forbidden City. His escapades led him to smallpox and ultimately death. By 1875, Cixi was back at the helm of total power.

> Cixi lived the life of luxury. It is estimated that the cost of running her court was about $6.5 million (£9 million) per year

The Tongzhi Emperor died without a male heir, leaving China in an unprecedented succession crisis: members of the generation above were ruled out as they could not succeed their nephew. After disagreement between Cixi and Ci'an, the four-year-old son of Prince Chun and Cixi's sister, Zaitain, was chosen to be the new Guangxu Emperor.

Soon after, Ci'an died and Cixi fell seriously ill. For some years the empress dowager had only written contact with her ministers, but she continued to wield ultimate power. When the Guangxu Emperor gained the right to rule in 1887, court officials encouraged Cixi to maintain her position until a later date. Court officials would put more effort into impressing Cixi than the emperor, and the young man was often overlooked entirely when it came to official government business. This decision, which Cixi had no issue accepting, arguably marks the start of Imperial China's unravelling, as behind the scenes, the Guangxu Emperor paid increasing attention to liberal ideas of reformation, and when he acceded to the throne, he implemented a series of political, legal and social changes.

These changes proved too sudden for China, and displeased the conservatively minded Cixi, who brought allegations of treason against the emperor, and subsequently resumed the role of regent.

By this time, China was increasingly facing pressure from foreign influences. Cixi, frustrated with foreign interference, allied with an anti-Christian, anti-foreign cult known as The Boxers. This was to be her most disastrous failure. The Boxers launched widespread attacks on missionaries and diplomats, ultimately resulting in another foreign occupancy of Beijing. Court officials encouraged her to continue the fight against allied forces, but she knew she'd been bested. Cixi was able to negotiate a treaty that meant China would not have to give up any further territories, and - crucially - she would be permitted to continue her reign when the war was concluded.

She uncharacteristically accepted responsibility for the Boxer Rebellion, issuing a decree of 'self-reproach', and upon her return to Beijing, set about implementing sweeping political reforms that drew upon foreign policies in a bid to rectify internal issues within China. She even sponsored the implementation of a reform programme more radical than the one suggested by the reformers she'd previously had beheaded.

This was a marked step-change for the conservative Cixi, who had historically distrusted foreigners, and historians debate whether she truly envisioned a bold new China, or if, after a lifetime of fighting for power, she'd simply grown tired of resistance. She died on 15 November 1908, and on her death bed said she'd "never had a moment in life without anxiety."

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1930 – 1975

Haile Selassie I

Controversial for some, but an inspiration and even God for many others, the Lion of Judah is one of Africa's most important figures

The year is 1966, and a crowd of thousands is gathered at Palisadoes Airport in Kingston, Jamaica, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the one they call the King of Kings, the Lion of Judah, the Almighty One. Scores of devoted Rastafarians have travelled from across the country to catch a glimpse of the man they believe to be God on Earth, an African Emperor travelling thousands of miles across the ocean to visit this small Caribbean nation. A hum of drums and joyous singing rings through the air and as the long-awaited plane finally lands and crawls to a halt, a symbol of a lion blazoned on its side, the crowd surges to meet it. Officials appeal for calm from the crowd for some minutes before eventually a figure is spotted at the top of the plane's landing steps. An elderly man of small stature, wearing a military uniform that almost engulfs him, steps out to greet the ecstatic crowd – Haile Selassie has arrived.

> He was the last emperor of Ethiopia, which fell into turmoil after his deposition

Although in later life he would brush shoulders with world leaders and even be worshipped as God among men, Haile Selassie's surroundings at his birth, at least, were humble. He was born Tafari Makonnen in a simple mud hut, in Ejersa Gora, Ethiopia. His father, Ras Makonnen, was the governor of Harrar, an Ethiopian province, as well as a close advisor of Emperor Menelik II. After his father's death, Tafari became close with the Emperor, who saw great potential in the young man who was made the governor of Harrar when he was just 17.

The young Tafari's rise to power was quick and in 1913, at the age of just 21, he became regent and heir apparent to the late Emperor's daughter, Zauditu. During this period he struggled against the Empress' relative conservatism and resistance to modernisation, but he did successfully bring Ethiopia into the League of Nations, the international body set up in the aftermath of World War I, in 1923. His reforms of the country signalled further centralisation of power, removing many of the powers held by regional rulers. In 1930, Empress Zauditu died, and Tafari was able to assume the throne. He took the name Haile Selassie, meaning Power of the Trinity, as his official title, a name that would very shortly be known throughout the world.

> He was and still is revered by Rastafarians as a prophet from God and even a reincarnation of Jesus Christ

Over his first few years as Emperor, Selassie sought to continue his education reforms, modernising education and placing his country further on the world stage. However, he couldn't have predicted the horrific crisis looming on the horizon that would devastate Ethiopia. The menace of Fascism had been gradually sprouting in Italy since the 1920s, and by the 1930s Benito Mussolini was in complete control of the country as dictator. Known as Il Duce or The Leader, Mussolini was seeking to build a new Roman Empire for himself, to restore Italian

HAILE SELASSIE I
Ethiopia, 1892-1975

Brief Bio

Born Tafari Makonnen, his title, 'Ras' (roughly equivalent to duke), gives him the name that we associate with the movement that bears it, Rastafarianism. Those who follow this faith believe that this Ethiopian Emperor was a god on Earth, even a representative of Jesus Christ himself. To add to the symbolism, his regnal name means 'Power of the Trinity'.

Like many of Ethiopia's traditional leaders, he drew his authority as a direct descendent of King Soloman

> "Haile Selassie chose to flee Ethiopia as the inevitable conclusion to the war became apparent"

pride and exploit the mineral wealth of Africa. Years earlier, at the end of the 19th century, Italy had tried and failed to take Ethiopia in an embarrassing series of defeats by the army of Emperor Menelik II. By 1934 the European power was poised to strike once again, but this time with deadly efficiency. On 3 October 1935 the Italian army invaded and within a year the country had been conquered.

In a move that attracted much criticism from his opponents in later life, Selassie chose to flee Ethiopia as the inevitable conclusion to the war became apparent. He escaped through neighbouring French-held territories on his way to England. The full horrors of the war he left behind would not be fully revealed to the world until June of the same year when he addressed the 52 state members of the League of Nations. In his famous speech, he decried the inaction of the League, which he had expected to protect his vulnerable country, as was its mandate. He also spoke of the great atrocities that were committed by the Italian army as it pressed forward. "It is not only upon warriors that the Italian Government has made war," he said. "It has above all attacked populations far removed from hostilities, in order to terrorise and exterminate them." His accounts that Italy had been using chemical weapons - including noxious gases that had been banned since the end of the First World War - were shocking. His ominous warning to the League is perhaps one of the most famous forewarnings of the impending world war: "I decided to come myself to bear witness against the crime perpetrated against my people and give Europe a warning of the doom that awaits it, if it should bow before the accomplished fact."

Selassie spent the remainder of the 1930s in exile, in a small house near Bath, England and became a symbol of the resistance against the Italian invaders. Soon enough Europe slipped into war once again in 1939, and in 1940 Mussolini declared war on Britain and France, joining with Hitler. The Italian adventure in Africa came to a decisive close as British colonial forces and their allies drove the Italians out of most of Africa in what became known as the East African Campaign. A combined force of African, Ethiopian and British Commonwealth troops helped to free Ethiopia and in 1941 Selassie re-entered Addis Ababa to retake his throne.

After his return, Selassie was if anything more determined to centralise the country's power around himself, as well as further modernise its infrastructure, though this contradiction would later cost him dearly. In 1950 he founded the University of Addis Ababa and in 1955 released a

> In his speech to the League of Nations in 1936, he warned of a horror awaiting Europe, foreshadowing World War II

The Second Italo-Ethiopian War

On 3 October 1935 Italy invaded Ethiopia on the presupposition of retaliating against a cross-border attack. In reality, Mussolini was seeking to gain greater control over East Africa, as well as regain Italian pride after its defeat to the African nation in the 19th Century. Il Duce was also looking to exploit the rich mineral wealth that he believed lay in Ethiopia's earth. Selassie reacted to the aggression initially by withdrawing his troops away from the advancing Italian force, in a bid to display an unaggressive front and perhaps negotiate a peace. As the war continued and it became more likely that the invaders would win, Selassie chose to flee the country and began travelling to England. In his later speech to the League of Nations, Selassie spoke of how the Italians used chemical weapons on civilians, in order to terrorise the population into surrender, or even to wipe them out altogether. After five years of occupation, the Italian occupation came to an end when British forces, along with Ethiopian resistance fighters and their allies, expelled Mussolini's army. This came shortly after the outbreak of World War II, with Fascist Italy allied to Nazi Germany. Selassie finally returned to his home country in 1941.

Defining moment

Appeal to the League of Nations

June 1936

Speaking in Geneva, Haile's famous speech to the League of Nations, denouncing the Italian invasion of his country, catapults him even further onto the world stage. As a member of the League, Ethiopia expected the support of the other countries and Haile even explained how this presupposed protection deterred him from preparing for the Italian threat. He decries the use of chemical weapons, including mustard gas and other noxious substances sprayed down by the Italian air force. These weapons had been prohibited since the First World War, where their use had been devastating. Haile calls upon the League to act in defence of his small nation and warns that a similar fate is awaiting the countries of Europe.

Timeline

1892

- **Born in Ejersa Goro**
  Haile is born Tafari Makonnen in a province of Ethiopia, in a mud hut. He is the only surviving legitimate heir of Ras Makonnen, the governor or Harrar and advisor to Emperor Menelik II.
  23 July 1892
- **Becomes regent**
  Emperor Menelik II dies with no male heir and Tafari becomes regent, with the late Emperor's daughter Zauditu inheriting the position of Empress.
  1913
- **Crowned Emperor**
  After Zauditu dies on 2 April, Tafari inherits the crown. He adopts the new title Haile Selassie, or 'power of the trinity', as his official name as Emperor.
  2 November 1930
- **Mussolini invades**
  In a bid to expand its Imperial ambitions and extend its control over Africa, Italy invades Ethiopia. This brief war lasts until May 1936, when the Italian army enters Addis Ababa.
  3 October 1935
- **Exile in England**
  After the Italian occupation, Haile flees to England, where he remains in exile. He buys Fairfield House near Bath, Somerset, where he spends the next five years.
  2 May 1936

- **The East Africa Campaign**
  With the help of British and other forces, the Italian army is defeated in Ethiopia and the occupation comes to an end. Haile returns and reforms a government.
  January 1941

new constitution for the country, extending voting rights further. However, he still maintained close control over the main facets of government, with all the key figures of authority, including the prime minister, acting almost as his royal court. These policies struck a peculiar balance - on the one side stretching out the hand of modernity and progress, while with the other maintaining a vice grip over all the executive power.

By the turn of the Sixties, Selassie was becoming an elderly man, but some of his most turbulent years still lay ahead of him. While the Emperor was on a state visit abroad, a group of disgruntled students, along with members of Selassie's own bodyguard, attempted to form a coup and take over the government. Though the plotters failed due to hopeless planning, it rocked the royal boat and gave the country a taste of mayhem to come. The very intelligentsia he had created through his reforms had turned against him.

Undeterred, Selassie continued to build his legacy, founding the Organisation of African Unity in 1963, a body designed to bring together the continent's nations and end colonisation, as well as making numerous state visits all over the world. He visited America several times, a country he greatly admired and relied on as an ally, but perhaps his defining and for many people most memorable visit was to Jamaica in 1966.

From the moment of his crowning as Emperor, from 1930 onwards, a sect of dedicated followers had formed in Jamaica, known as Rastafari. The religious sub-culture was and still is entirely based around Selassie himself, taking his name before his coronation, Ras Tafari, as its identity. The Rastafari worshipped Selassie as the living God on Earth, the promised descendant of Solomon, the African King. As the land ruled, Ethiopia was also considered sacred, and many Rastafari believed and still believe it to be their Zion, the holy land where they should return. His brief visit to Jamaica in 1966 was a poignant occasion for the movement, which swelled in numbers in later years after the emergence of and popularity of Bob Marley and reggae music.

If the Emperor's popularity abroad was on a high, it couldn't have been more different on his own soil. The seeds he had planted with his educational and structural reforms had by now taken root in the form of a progressive and leftist youth, impelled by the liberal Sixties and hungry for faster progression and greater freedoms than the old regime was willing to provide.

By 1974, the revolutionary aspects of the military, buoyed by new ideology and ambition, were ready to make their move on the government and forced the Emperor to step down in September of that year. Not long after, in August the following year, Selassie was declared dead while in the custody of the revolutionary government. Though his reign cannot be characterised as perfect, the Lion of Judah embodied the great changes that happened to his country and Africa as a whole throughout the 20th Century. Certainly, he occupies the unique position of being revered as a god, and it is for this, as well as remaining the enduring symbol of his nation and his people, that he is remembered.

> The word Rastafari actually derives from Selassie's former title and given name, Ras Tafari

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, in his study

Life in the time of Haile Selassie

The League of Nations

Formed in the aftermath of the First World War, the League of Nations consisted of 52 member states. The League's aims included protecting its members from aggressive nations, as well as preventing illegal trafficking, though the outbreak of World War II is testament to its overall ineffectiveness.

Italian Colonialism

After his gradual rise to becoming the Fascist dictator of Italy in the 1920s, Mussolini sought to create his new Roman Empire, with himself at its head. As well as restoring hurt Italian pride, Il Duce also believed that by taking parts of mineral-rich Africa he could solve his country's economic woes.

The Rastafari Movement

Emerging around the 1930s, largely in Jamaica, the Rastafari movement mixes Zionist Christian theology with ritualistic cannabis use. Rastafarians consider Haile Selassie to be God on Earth, as they believe is prophesised in the Bible.

The Organisation of African Unity

The OAU was founded in Addis Abba, the capital of Ethiopia, by Haile Selassie. Its chief aim was to strengthen the bonds between the nations of the continent and to form a united front against external aggressors and colonialism in general. It was eventually disbanded in 2002.

Spread of Marxism

Communism and Marxism were the most influential political ideologies to emerge during the 20th century and reshaped the political landscapes of the world forever. Though they were slower to become popular in Ethiopia, left-wing, socialist and progressive ideals became more and more popular as the century wore on.

Defining moment

Visit to the Caribbean

21 April 1966

On landing in Kingston, Jamaica on a state visit, Haile is greeted by a frenzied crowd of thousands, many of whom are members of the Rastafari movement. Emerging during the 1930s, this religious and spiritual movement claimed that the Ethiopian Emperor was divine and even a reincarnation of Jesus Christ. During his brief visit, Haile addressed both houses of the Jamaican parliament and laid a wreath of remembrance at Kingston's war memorial. His presence causes utter chaos wherever he travels around the island, such is the devotion of those people who consider him to be God on Earth. It's debated whether Haile actually denied or supported the claims of his divinity.

1975

Silver jubilee
Haile celebrates 25 years as Emperor and in the same year grants a new constitution giving greater freedoms to his subjects, without diminishing his own powers.
2 November 1955

A failed coup
While on a visit abroad, groups of discontent students, in collaboration with members of the royal bodyguard and army, attempt to organise a coup to depose the Emperor.
14 December 1960

Deposed as Emperor
By now advanced in age, the Emperor is no longer able to maintain the authority he once held and he is deposed by a socialist coup led by the military, beginning the Ethiopian Revolution.
13 September 1974

Death
Haile Selassie dies while in the custody of the revolutionary military government at the age of 83. The circumstances of his death are still shrouded in suspicion.
27 August 1975

© Alamy, Getty, Corbis

1936

Edward VIII

Edward VIII shocked the world in 1936 when he announced to Britain and her empire that he was abdicating his throne for an American socialite named Wallis Simpson

In the late Thirties, Britain was facing its darkest hour. Hitler and his fascist thugs were rattling the sabre across Europe, quashing the rights of free men and women everywhere. Italy and Spain had fallen to the oppression of right-wing dictatorships and it wouldn't be long before war would sweep through the last free countries of the European continent. This was a time for stout hearts and stiff upper lips, for every British soul to look to the defence of the country and face these evil forces valiantly. Meanwhile Edward, Duke of Windsor, who until very recently had been King of Great Britain, sat in his villa in Antibes, France.

According to his biographers Edward had an unhappy childhood; his nanny would deliberately hurt him

Edward's childhood and teenage years were a preparatory education to groom him for the day he would become King of Great Britain. He had one-to-one tuition with the best tutors in the land and attended renowned military schools - yet he was deeply unhappy. His father George, later to be crowned King George V, stood as a domineering and at times terrifying figure to Edward and his two siblings. George ran his household like a military operation, the children were forced to always be on time, to dress correctly and behave properly. Punishments included frightening confrontations with George in his study; a harsh prospect for Edward who was small and shy.

At just 12 years old, Edward's father felt he needed a military education in order to prepare him for public life. He was sent to the naval college at Osborne on the Isle of Wight. Edward's shy nature meant that he struggled to fit in with the other boys and bullying was an almost inevitable consequence. He did eventually find his feet and settled into this regimented life, passing the naval examination board for Dartmouth officer school in 1909. Edward continued to be a shy young man. During his cadet training, his parents threw a party for him at Buckingham Palace about which he recorded in his diary, 'I had to dance, a thing I hate, the whole thing was a great strain.' The 19-year-old Edward was still struggling to find his place in the world outside of the ritual of royal protocol.

It was clear that Edward lacked direction but World War I would see to it that all men of his age would be given a chance to prove themselves. Edward wanted to serve with the men of his army regiment on the frontline, he yearned to make a difference and war afforded him the opportunity. Unfortunately, the Secretary for War Lord Kitchener refused his request stating that it would be too dangerous for the young man. Edward continued to insist on being allowed to go and in the end toured the front regardless.

His admiration for the troops was shown in a correspondence he sent back to England, 'I'm very keen on the fighting troops being made as comfortable as possible always... the poor devils have a bloody enough time in the trenches... they are absolutely marvellous.' The war years had given Edward a sense of freedom he wouldn't normally have been permitted, he could meet other

> "He continued to make horrendous errors in judgement, conducting a tour of Nazi Germany in 1937 and allowing himself to be photographed with Hitler"

Wallis Simpson was the love of Edward's life, though it was known that he had other mistresses previously

EDWARD VIII

Britain, 1894 – 1972

Brief Bio Playboy prince Edward never really wanted to be king, but the death of his father forced it on him. The rigours of an unhappy childhood resulted in a man who pursued pleasure and he struggled to combine this with his royal duties as Prince of Wales. His affair with Wallis Simpson sounded the death knell for his kingship.

A dark connection

The dark connection between Hitler and the British royal family in the Thirties begun in 1935 when the Fuhrer used Charles Edward, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha as an informal ambassador of goodwill to the royal family. Charles seemed to have succeeded in persuading Edward that Hitler was the only defence against communism. The connection grew stronger when Edward decided to visit Germany in 1937. A clandestine meeting between Edward and committed Nazis Rudolf Hess and Martin Bormann took place in Edward's hotel in Paris before the visit. An impression of the meeting written by Hess informed Hitler that, 'the Duke was proud of his German blood' and there was 'no need to lose a single German life in invading Britain. The Duke and his clever wife will deliver the goods.' Hess fully expected Edward to regain power in Britain and persuade the populace to seek peace. The visit to Germany then went ahead, Hitler was charming and Edward enjoyed his tour. As the war progressed, a secret memorandum to American president Roosevelt from J Edgar Hoover claimed, 'that the Duke of Windsor entered into an agreement. If Germany was victorious [Herman Goering] would install the Duke of Windsor as King of England.' While it seems unlikely Edward did agree to this, he must have maintained links with the Nazis for this type of rumour to circulate.

men his own age under the guise of these tours and drop the cold protocol normally required of official visits.

After the armistice it was as if this new-found freedom had disappeared with the rifles and bayonets. He commented in 1919, ' I mixed with men... I found my manhood.' His father was quick to clip his new found self-confidence sternly informing him, 'don't think you act like other people.' He longed for the freedom given to him during the war and found his new life of state openings and formal banquets smothering. He drifted through his university career failing to make an impact academically and then went on an extended tour of the empire. While this should have offered him the adventure he yearned for, he quickly saw that he was just as much a prisoner abroad as he was at home. Every step he took was closely monitored, and he became frustrated and depressed. His frustration made him angry and he began to display the bigotry and dismissive nature inherited by many English aristocracy of the time. He was appalled by the Australian aborigines describing them as, 'the most revolting form of living creatures I've ever seen.' He also began to hate communism with unrelenting zeal.

> Edward gained his pilot's licence and founded the 32 Royal squadron, used for royal flights to official engagements

It was during this unhappy time that in 1931 he met the woman that would change his life forever – Wallis Simpson. Edward had already had a number of affairs but they were fleeting. In Wallis he found something that he hadn't seen in other women, a strong independent character that knew her own mind and refused to stand on ceremony. He quickly became infatuated by her, it was said by observers that he lost 'all sense of reason' when he was around her. He lavished her with jewellery, gold or whatever she wanted, it seemed as if Edward had finally found someone to give his life meaning. There was however a complication as far as Edward's position as the Prince of Wales was concerned; Wallis was a married woman. When she became Edward's mistress she promised to give up her second husband for him but this wouldn't soothe the sensibilities of his family. To compound the issue she wasn't from a royal household, she was an American socialite from Baltimore. When it became obvious to Edward's father in 1934 that this wasn't another casual relationship he was furious; he angrily told him to get rid of her.

On 20 January 1936, George V died and the question of Wallis's status was immediately brought into question. Would she become queen? The short answer was absolutely not – she was twice divorced and unpopular with the British establishment. Absurd rumours circulated about the spell she had placed Edward under, her devious manipulation, her dark hold over the new king. The issue was becoming even more serious, especially considering that the country was edging ever closer to another world war. The nation needed leadership, not uncertainty, but Edward did not see the two issues as related. He wanted to marry Wallis, and everything else was of secondary importance. Besides, Adolf Hitler would defeat the

Defining moment

Tour of the empire

5 August 1919

After the war, Edward spends the next five years touring the empire and representing his father abroad. He does a number of public relation events including presenting the Prince of Wales cup to the Canadian hockey league and visiting the politically sensitive city of Quebec where he receives a warm welcome. His charm and good looks serve him well and he becomes a popular figure. Not all of his visits went so smoothly however; in a high-profile visit to Australia he wrote of the Aborigines, 'they are the most revolting form of living creatures I've ever seen'.

Defining moment

Royal family meet Wallis

November 1934

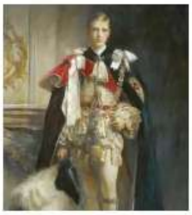
Edward's less than discreet affair with Wallis Simpson comes to a head in 1934 when Edward invites Simpson to an evening party at Buckingham Palace. Edward's father had originally struck her name out of the list of invitations but Edward invited her, regardless. When George finds out, he becomes outraged and shouts his disapproval. Simpson is subsequently frozen out of all royal family functions. This puts enormous strain on the relationship between Edward and his father, lending more fuel to the suspicion that Edward will abdicate when George dies.

1894

A prince is born
Edward Windsor is born at White Lodge, Richmond Park London to George and Mary, the Duke and Duchess of York. He is given the title His Highness Prince Edward of York.
23 June 1894

The Prince at Dartmouth
On the wishes of his family, Edward joins the navy as an officer cadet at Dartmouth Navy College. He spends two years there before becoming a Midshipman.
September 1909

Prince of Wales and heir apparent
On the death of Edward VII, Edward's father becomes the King of Britain and her empire. Edward is immediately invested as the Prince of Wales and is now next in line to the throne.
23 June 1910



War
At the outbreak of World War I, Edward joins the Grenadier guards and asks to serve at the front. This request is refused by the Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener.
28 July 1914

Time magazine story
Time magazine publishes a story in which Edward is reported to have said that he would abdicate the throne. This is officially denied, but the story serves as an insight into his thoughts.
29 April 1929

communists and the world would be at peace - there was really nothing to worry about as far as he was concerned.

The fact that Edward was for the appeasement of Hitler was not unusual; many members of the British establishment were in the late Thirties. What was compounding the issue was the Nazi party was seen to be influencing the king through Wallis. Whether this was true or not is debatable but many influential people saw it so; the American ambassador commented, 'many people here suspect that Mrs Simpson is actually in German pay.' The situation was looking bad and as an illustration of the tense atmosphere, Edward suffered an assassination attempt when a lone gunman apparently working for an undisclosed foreign power tried to pull a gun on him. When Edward returned to Buckingham Palace the first sympathy call was from Hitler.

Then in November 1936 Edward told Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin that he was going to marry Wallis. Baldwin rejected the proposal, stating that it would be unacceptable to the British cabinet if the head of state married a twice-divorcee. Wallis herself expected full marriage, and Edward refused to give her up. He saw no option; on the 11 December he announced to Britain and the empire, "I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as King... without the help and support of the woman I love." He abdicated the throne, passing the duty to his brother Albert, the father of Queen Elizabeth II.

Edward and Wallis were now in limbo. They were granted official titles, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, but were frozen out of much of the public salary they should have received for the role. Once again Edward fell into a deep depression, he relied on the hospitality of friends abroad and used the Château de Candé in France to marry Wallis. He became an embittered and ungrateful guest, running up huge phone bills and refusing to pay for anything. He also continued to make horrendous errors in judgement, conducting a tour of Nazi Germany in 1937 and allowing himself to be photographed with Hitler.

In 1940, as a way of preventing any more embarrassment to the royal family, Winston Churchill gave the Duke a governorship in the Bahamas. Edward saw it for what it was - a way to get him out of the way. He conducted his duties, made inroads into improving the situations of the workers on the islands but hated his current position none the less. He had become increasingly estranged from his family.

By the time the war was over and the dust had settled over his relationship with Wallis, the Duke was content to live quietly. He established himself in France at the 4 Route du Champ d'Entraînement Paris, later to be known as Villa Windsor, where he spent the rest of his days in retirement. He had lived a privileged life but it was a life he did not want, in the end he gave up the power he inherited at birth for the woman he loved.

> Edward was stanchly anti-communist and feared the communist takeover of Europe during the Thirties

Life in the time of Edward VIII

The British Empire

Dominions like Canada, Australia and New Zealand governed their own affairs but still held political ties with Britain through the British monarchy. Other countries like Burma and India were governed directly as colonies.

An age of extremes

The huge social upheaval caused by the Great Depression created a credibility gap between liberal governments and their citizens in Europe. This gave rise to extremist governments from the left and right.

Role of the monarchy

The role of the monarchy in Britain and throughout the Commonwealth was changing in the wake of the mass media. It was no longer enough for the monarch to simply open Parliament once a year, the Royal family was expected to set an example.

Colonial unrest

The Thirties gave rise to independence movements in many imperial colonies. The most vocal of these movements came from India and Mahatma Gandhi's freedom group. While the British government doggedly hung on to its empire in India, the British people started to wonder if it was worth it.

Britain, a waning power?

No-one could dispute that British influence throughout the globe remained strong during the Thirties, but the government's reluctance to rearm and prepare for war in the face of fascist and communist threats was said to be indicative of an waning power that no longer had the stomach for military commitments.

Defining moment

Abdication

10 December 1936

Edward makes it clear to Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin that he will not change his mind about marrying Wallis as soon as her second divorce is finalised. Baldwin informs Edward that the cabinet and the imperial parliaments will not accept his marriage to Wallis if he still wishes to be king. With Edward finding it impossible to reconcile his personal life with his duty as a future monarch, he finally decides to abdicate and signs the act at Fort Belvedere in the presence of his younger brother Albert the Duke of York who is next in line to the throne.

Edward preparing to inform the nation that he is abdicating the throne in 1936

- **Succession to the throne**
  George V dies and Edward is immediately put forward for the succession. It also becomes known within the government that he intends to soon marry Wallis.
  20 January 1936

- **Assassination attempt**
  A man called George McMahon pulls a gun on Edward and is quickly set upon by police. He testifies that he was working for a foreign power although this is never proved.
  16 July 1936
- **Marriage to Wallis**
  Edward and Wallis marry at the Château de Candé in France. While the service is attended by a number of high-profile socialites, none of the royal family attends.
  3 June 1937
- **Visit to Germany**
  Against the advice of the British Government, Edward and Wallis visit Nazi Germany and are warmly welcomed by Adolf Hitler. It is reported that he almost gives a Nazi salute.
  October 1937

- **Governor of the Bahamas**
  In an effort to prevent Edward and Wallis, now Duke and Duchess of Windsor, from embarrassing the British government even more, Edward is given the governorship of the Bahamas.
  18 August 1940
- **Retirement**
  With the war won and the new world order establishing itself in Europe, France becomes safe again for British citizens. Edward and Wallis retire there comfortably.
  November 1952

1972

- **Death of a Duke**
  Edward dies peacefully in his sleep aged 77. His body is flown back to England and a funeral service is attended by Queen Elizabeth II. His body is buried at the royal burial ground at Frogmore.
  28 May 1972

© Alamy

1952 – present

Elizabeth II

After more than 65 years on the throne, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II remains one of history's most popular monarchs

Her Majesty the Queen may not have led armies into glorious battle or faced down bloodthirsty rebellions in far-flung corners of her realm, yet she remains one of the most popular and beloved rulers to have ever worn the crown. Her reign as queen is also the longest the nation has ever known. Such a lengthy tenure may seem less noteworthy in an age removed from murderous plots and usurping royal relatives, but Elizabeth has nonetheless sat resolute in her duties through the latter half of the 20th century and the burgeoning years of the 21st - a time when the Western world metamorphosed in the wake of two world wars. Britain and her many territories have undergone quite the transformation, and the role of monarch and the royal family has changed drastically along with it.

After more than six decades as the head of state, Elizabeth has faced the perils, challenges and benefits of being a monarch in the modern age. Gone are the threats of invasion, intrigue and insurrections, replaced instead by satire, media scandals and the weight of public opinion. She remains the most well-travelled of any British monarch and her tireless work with hundreds of charities around the world set a precedent that has typified the role of a modern-day royal.

After WWII, the young Elizabeth saved up her ration coupons to afford the material for her wedding dress

It seems bizarre then, when you consider the extent of her future reign, that the young Princess Elizabeth was barely a consideration for the throne as a child. Born on 21 April 1926, the daughter of Prince Albert, Duke of York, Elizabeth was at the time third in the line of succession behind her uncle, the Prince of Wales, and her father. However, as was royal protocol, it was assumed that her uncle would almost certainly father children of his own, pushing Elizabeth further down the line. She was never expected to become queen.

But to the young princess, such trivialities were of little concern. Nicknamed 'Lillibet' by her family, she enjoyed a close relationship with her father, her mother Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (later the Queen Mother) and her grandfather, George V. The king's health was already deteriorating by the time Elizabeth was born, but her regular visits and playful relationship with the ailing monarch were said to have buoyed his spirits far more than any medicine. Her positive effect was even covered by newspapers - a taste of just how obsessed the media could, and would, become with its own monarchy. Still, Elizabeth got to enjoy the pomp and privilege of being a royal without the pressures of being an heir apparent or an heir presumptive. However, no one could see the turn of events that came next.

The king was dead. George V had finally passed away from a worsening bout of septicaemia on 20 January 1936, with the throne then passing to his eldest son, the Prince of Wales. Crowned King Edward VIII, it was apparent from the very start that Edward wasn't going to be a conventional king. Known for his vocal dislike of court protocols and politicians, the new monarch even broke convention by watching the proclamation of his own ascendancy from a window in St James's Palace. By his side stood Wallis Simpson, an American socialite whom the 41-year-old king had been courting for some time. Edward's association with the once divorced and still married (to her second husband) Simpson was already causing outrage in royal and political circles alike, but it would take his decision to propose to her a few months later to tip the balance.

ELIZABETH II

Britain, 1926 - present

Brief Bio

Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain may not have faced the religious upheaval and Spanish Armadas of her Tudor namesake, but her six-decades-long reign has been just as memorable. Crowned in the aftermath of WWII, Elizabeth has had to deal with a fluctuating relationship with British politics, an evolving Commonwealth and even the very purpose of a monarch in the modern age.

The Queen sent her first email in 1976. She sent the message over ARPANET, a small-scale precursor to the internet

The annus horribilis

1992 was an eventful and difficult year for Queen Elizabeth II

There have been a number of challenging years in Elizabeth's considerable reign, but 1992 proved to be one her worst. Despite it marking the 40th anniversary of her ascension to the throne, those 12 months were littered with political issues and startling catastrophes that likely pushed the normally resolute monarch to her limits. Elizabeth named the period her 'annus horribilis' (likely a reference to John Dryden's poem of the same name that describes London in the grip of the Great Plague and Great Fire of London in 1666).

It all started in March when her second son, Prince Andrew Duke of York, separated from his wife Sarah Ferguson duchess of York. The couple made an official announcement stating the separation was amicable, but speculation was rife that all was not so rosy behind the scenes. These rumours seemingly sprung to life a few months later when photos of the duchess topless with her lover appeared all over the tabloid newspapers. It was an incredibly embarrassing episode for the royal household and it didn't bode well for the rest of the year.

The incidents continued a month after the duke and duchess' split in March with another member of the royal family. Her daughter Anne, the Princess Royal, had married Mark Phillips, a lieutenant in the 1st Queen's Dragoon Guards, in 1973 and it seemed another fairy-tale royal union to captivate the public. However, the couple decided to separate in 1989, citing years of strain stemming from Phillips' military commitments. In April 1992 the couple officially divorced, further adding to a media-fuelled story that the royal family was splintering under the strain of being in the public eye.

In June, things got even worse. The journalist Andrew Morton had just released his biography of the princess of Wales, *Diana: Her True Story*, and it was filled with sensational stories regarding Diana and her deteriorating relationship with Prince Charles. The couple's fairy-tale relationship had been falling apart as early as the mid-1980s and the two were openly seeing other people despite still being married. Diana's affair with Major James Hewitt, Charles's liaison with Camilla Parker-Bowles and Diana's supposed suicidal thoughts were sensationalised in gruesome detail and it caused the Queen, and her whole royal family, a great deal of embarrassment for years to come.

To top it all off, one of the Queen's favourite residences was badly damaged by a raging inferno in the same year. On the 20 November - a mere four days before the Queen would give her Guildhall speech in which she referred to her year as her annus horribilis - Windsor Castle caught fire, causing severe damage to the whole structure. So bad was the damage that it cost an estimated £36.5 million to repair over the following five years. The blaze started when a spotlight caused a curtain to catch alight and it soon spread through the entire castle in a matter of minutes. There were no serious injuries and no deaths as a result of the blaze, but the royal administration was forced to open Buckingham Palace soon after in order to help fund the castle's restoration program.

As the first female monarch in 51 years, Elizabeth knew many challenges faced her in a rapidly changing world

Mounting pressure from the rest of the royal family and Parliament forced the king to choose between his duties as a monarch and his love for a woman judged too politically troublesome to be his queen. Edward, forever the rebel, chose his heart over his crown and abdicated on 10 December 1936 after 326 days as king (among the shorter reigns of British monarchs). This unforeseen decision threw Edward's younger brother, Elizabeth's father, onto the throne. With her father crowned George VI on 12 May 1937, the 11-year-old princess was no longer a carefree child, but an heir presumptive to the British throne. (An heir presumptive is someone who is first in line to the throne, but whose position can be superseded by a stronger claim - conversely, an heir apparent is someone in the same position, minus the chance of a challenge.)

It was during her early teens that Elizabeth met Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark. The two began a slow courtship, with Philip travelling regularly as part of his service in the Royal Navy - eventually the young couple announced their engagement on 9 July 1947. Her choice of fiancé caused friction with some members of the royal court. Philip had very little financial standing and his family had marital ties to the Nazi party in Germany, but his conversion from Greek Orthodoxy to Anglicanism and the taking of his mother's family name, Mountbatten, helped ease the union in the eyes of his detractors. The two married later that year on 20 November at Westminster Abbey. Despite the hundreds of presents the couple received from around the world, Elizabeth refused to allow the wedding to be a lavish affair.

Despite his royal responsibilities as both a duke and then a king, George VI enjoyed a close and positive relationship with his two daughters

As the health of King George VI began to deteriorate, Elizabeth and Philip's first two children were born – Prince Charles, born on 14 November 1948 and Princess Anne born on 15 August 1950. Elizabeth was enjoying her new role as mother, yet her responsibilities on behalf of the king were becoming more time-consuming as she travelled Europe on his behalf to visit those countries still recovering from the scars of World War II. On 6 February 1952, the king eventually succumbed to the melting pot of cancers and tumours that were robbing him of life. And, just like that, the 25-year-old princess became the new monarch of the realm.

Elizabeth was crowned at Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953, following over a year's worth of national mourning for the late king. Elizabeth chose to retain her given name as her regnal title and, under the advisement of prime minister Winston Churchill and her mother, the surname of Windsor (instead of her husband's family name). Upon her ascension she was officially crowned Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Union of South Africa, Pakistan and Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka).

The Commonwealth Of Nations, as it would come to be known, was an idea that began to form before Elizabeth was even born, yet it was under her reign that the Commonwealth swelled in size and became more than a gathering of former British territories. Many of these overseas nations were beginning to crave autonomy from Britain and the new queen embraced the idea fully. She and Philip, now the Duke of Edinburgh, began a six-month tour of the Commonwealth almost immediately following her coronation. With Europe still in a state of physical, economical and political recovery from World War II, Elizabeth's arrival had an almost talismanic effect. She even travelled further afield, becoming the first British reigning monarch to visit both Australia and New Zealand.

> The Queen has two birthdays: an official one celebrated in June by the Trooping the Colour ceremony, and her real one on 21 April

In 1956, Elizabeth experienced her first political misstep. Following the rise of nationalism in Egypt, Britain made a joint attempt with France to take control of the Suez Canal in Egypt. It was a short-lived effort and Britain was forced to withdraw as the USA attempted to appease the situation diplomatically. It was an embarrassing episode for the Conservative administration at the time, made worse by rumours that Elizabeth had been against invasion from the start. The prime minister, Anthony Eden, denied such a claim, but it was enough to undermine his position and he soon resigned. At this time, the Conservative government had no formal process to appoint a new prime minister in the middle of a parliamentary term.

The decision fell to Elizabeth who, under advisement, appointed Harold Macmillan as Eden's replacement. The decision, along with the Suez Canal fiasco, led to considerable criticism of the Queen from MPs, lords and the media. It was a stark reminder that the days of the monarch as a ruler were firmly resigned to the history books.

With her reign spanning over six decades, Elizabeth has become an intrinsic part of Britain's cultural identity

Life in the time of Elizabeth II

Empire to Commonwealth

During her reign, the realm has evolved from the British empire into the Commonwealth of Nations. This transition is the result of the decolonisation of the empire into an intergovernmental organisation that consists of 53 nations (mostly former British colonies) that are recognised as equal member states.

A shift in power

The actual power the king or queen of England can enact upon the realm is a shadow of its former self. The time of absolute royal authority is a thing of the past and Elizabeth II is bound by a constitutional agreement with Parliament that limits her influence over policies and legislation.

Travelling the globe

Elizabeth II remains one of the most well-travelled monarchs in British history. As the head of the Commonwealth, she flew to Canada in 1958 and opened the 23rd Parliament there, which served as just one of the ways that the crown has recognised the semi-autonomy of its member states.

Silver jubilee

In 1977, Elizabeth II celebrated the 25th anniversary of her accession to the throne. To mark the occasion, she and Prince Philip visited 36 counties – no monarch had visited so many parts of the UK within such a small amount of time.

Media frenzy

Public interest in the royal family had always been high, but the media's focus on royals took an alarmingly sensational turn in the 1980s. The media ran endless stories about how the Queen disapproved of prime minister Margaret Thatcher's often unpopular policies, fuelling rumours of a division between crown and government.

Once Elizabeth became queen, she travelled tirelessly across the world, including this trip to West Germany in 1965

So what were Elizabeth's political powers? Well, while Parliament holds autonomy from the crown in terms of its infrastructure, the king or queen still holds some administrative (be they mostly ceremonial) authorities. Elizabeth has the power to open and dissolve Parliament prior to a general election, as well the right to consult the prime minister on issues of state at any time. That's not to say that Elizabeth's position as queen is simply a figurehead - as monarch, Elizabeth must ratify all bills passed through Parliament. This is known as Royal Assent, and it's a political procedure that's not been refused since its creation in 1707. Even the Queen's speech (not to be confused with the Queen's Christmas message), delivered in Parliament every year, forms an important role, signifying royal approval of a new year in legislation.

While the 1960s and 1970s were a transformative period for Britain and the Commonwealth, with over 20 countries gaining independence, the 1980s were a mixed affair. Despite issues with rising unemployment, the nation was united in celebrating the union of Elizabeth's eldest son, Prince Charles with Lady Diana Spencer in 1981. It was a lavish affair and the presence of the bright, young princess-to-be was a breath of fresh air for the royal family's public image. Sadly, the jovial public mood was curtailed when the Falklands War broke out the following year. Even the Queen's middle child, Prince Andrew, took part in the Royal Navy's conflict with Argentinian forces in the South Atlantic. Despite her concerns, Elizabeth wanted Andrew to remain

> Despite all her travels, the Queen doesn't have a passport. Since the crown issues them, Her Majesty is exempt from needing to have one

The abdication
20 January-1 December 1936

1936 is a very tumultuous year for the royal family. In January, King George V (Elizabeth's grandfather) dies. The throne then passes to his eldest son Albert, who becomes Edward VIII. However, the uncrowned Edward chooses to abdicate less than 12 months later and his brother (and Elizabeth's father) the Duke of York becomes King George VI. With her father now presiding on the throne, Elizabeth becomes first in line to the throne at the age of ten. During this period, Princess Elizabeth is also referred to by the official title of 'heir presumptive'.

Elizabeth is crowned
2 June 1953

Following the death of her father, George VI, towards the end of 1952, the 26-year-old heir presumptive is finally crowned Queen Elizabeth II. Despite the tradition that the husband's surname is taken, it is decreed that Elizabeth will retain her family name of Windsor instead of Philip's name Mountbatten. At the time, Philip complains that, "I am the only man in the country not allowed to give his name to his own children." To appease the situation, the name Mountbatten-Windsor is adopted in 1960 for any male-line descendants who do not carry royal titles.

Timeline

1926

Elizabeth is born
Born Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor, the young princess is the daughter of George, Duke of York (later George VI) and Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (later Queen and then Queen Mother).
21 April 1926

Young love
In 1934 and 1937, the young princess meets with Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark. In 1939 they meet for a third time at the Royal Navy College in Dartmouth, with the 13-year-old Elizabeth remarking that she has fallen in love with the 18-year-old prince.
22 July 1939

Marriage to Philip
Princess Elizabeth marries Philip at Westminster Abbey after almost 15 years of slow courtship. Since tensions are still running high from the global catastrophe that was World War II, Philip's German relatives are not permitted to attend.
20 November 1947

Prince Charles is born
A month prior to the arrival of Elizabeth's first son, Charles, her father George VI decrees that any of her children will retain the title of prince or princess. This overturns the rules set out by George V that restricted such titles to children of the monarch or the monarch's son.
14 November 1948

For over 70 years the Queen Mother remained a source of guidance and inspiration, up to her death in 2001

in his original posting - a public decision that showed her pride as a mother as much as her commitment as queen. (A fact made all the more chilling when you consider Argentina planned to assassinate the prince during the conflict.)

Despite the high points of the previous decade, the 1990s were a challenging time for Elizabeth and the rest of the royal family. A fire at Windsor Castle at the tail end of 1992 caused catastrophic damage and destroyed priceless royal heirlooms, while the script for the Queen's speech was leaked and published by *The Sun* newspaper a year later. To make things even worse, the very public disintegration of Charles and Diana's marriage had become regular fodder for the British and international media. The publication of the Diana biography *Diana: Her True Story*, with its claims of an ongoing affair between the princess of Wales and Major James Hewitt, brought further strain on the royal family. Charles and Diana's eventual separation in 1993 would lead to years of criticism of the royal family's conduct as Diana rose to prominence as a charity worker. This scrutiny would fail to abate, even when Diana was tragically killed in a car crash in Paris in 1997.

The last decade and a half has seen the royal family enjoy a far more positive reception in the public eye. The death of the Queen Mother and Elizabeth's younger sister, Princess Margaret, in the space of two months in 2002 saw an outpouring of public support for the Queen, which flowed seamlessly into celebrations for the golden jubilee later that summer. Not one to let personal feelings affect her royal duties, Elizabeth set out on an extensive tour of the Commonwealth and returned to mass celebrations that surprised many, most notably the media. Her diamond jubilee a decade later further cemented the nation's more positive relationship with the crown, with celebrations across the land merging with excitement for London's hosting of the Olympics in 2012.

And now, in her 90s and having become the longest-reigning monarch in our country's history, the Queen still exudes the same principles of character she learned in those early years of her rule. She's a monarch who understands her place in the anatomy of a modern nation, less concerned with how history remembers her, but how she can serve the realm. As generations of younger royals continue to attract most media attention away from her, Elizabeth still remains an iconic figure in the identity of Britain and the Commonwealth.

Elizabeth II is the longest-reigning British monarch. Queen Victoria holds second place at 63 years and 216 days

The Falklands War

In comparison to the World War she lived through as a princess, the confrontation over the Falklands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands was a relatively low-key affair. Nonetheless, Great Britain's involvement in the ten-day crisis was covered in meticulous detail by the media, including the deployment of her second son, Prince Andrew, into the conflict.

The war itself was fought over the sovereignty of a number of islands in the South Atlantic, most notably the Falkland Islands (an archipelago consisting of two large islands and 776 smaller ones) with a population of just under 3,000 people. The Falklands had been a crown colony since 1841, but nearby Argentina refused to recognise Great Britain's claim, believing the islands to be Argentinian soil. On 2 April 1982, Argentina landed on the islands with a contingent of 600 troops and proceeded to take control of the whole area. Considering, though never officially stating, the invasion an act of war, the British government responded by sending the Royal Navy to engage the Argentinian navy and air force, as well as landing an amphibious assault on the island. The conflict lasted for two months, one week and five days and ended with Argentina's surrender. While 258 British sea and airmen were killed during the conflict, almost 650 soldiers died on the Argentinian side.

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"She understands her place in the anatomy of a modern nation"

Prince Andrew is born
At the beginning of 1960 - almost seven years into her reign as queen - Elizabeth gives birth to her second son, Prince Andrew, in the Belgian Suite of Buckingham Palace. He is baptised three months later.
19 February 1960

Prince Edward is born
Four years after the birth of Andrew, Elizabeth gives birth to third son Edward. The young prince is third in line to the throne at his time of birth, but in 2015 is now eighth in the order of succession; he's now known as the Earl of Wessex.
10 March 1964

The silver jubilee
In 1977, Elizabeth celebrates the first major anniversary of her accession. To celebrate, festivities and parties are held all across the Commonwealth during the year.
1977

Charles weds Diana
After a widely publicised courtship, Prince Charles marries Lady Diana Spencer at St Paul's Cathedral in a ceremony that captivates Great Britain and the wider world. The marriage will produce two sons, Prince William and Prince Harry.
29 July 1981

Diana passes away
Just as her wedding had captured the hearts and minds of the nation, the death of Diana, Princess of Wales is just as publicly scrutinised. Despite Elizabeth II requesting the divorce of Diana and Charles in 1995, Diana still remained a hugely popular figure.
31 Aug 1997

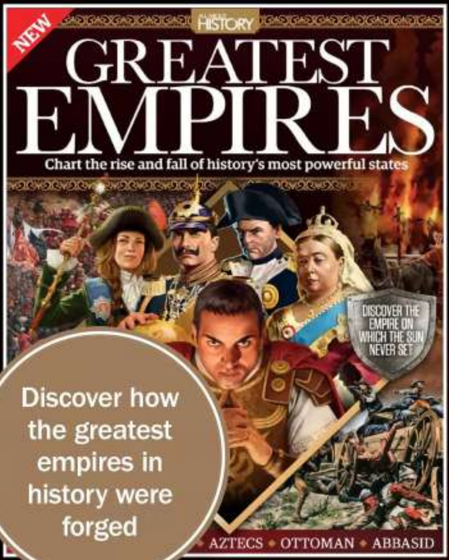
The Golden Jubilee
In 2002, Elizabeth marks the 50th anniversary of her accession to the throne. Despite the celebrations across the Commonwealth, the event is bittersweet, as the Queen Mother and Elizabeth's sister Princess Margaret have died a few months previously.
2002

The Diamond Jubilee
2-5 June 2012

In the summer of 2012, Elizabeth celebrates a whole 60 years as Queen of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. In a speech on Accession Day, Elizabeth says: "In this special year, as I dedicate myself anew to your service, I hope we will all be reminded of the power of togetherness and the convening strength of family, friendship and good neighbourliness." She and Philip tour the country extensively as part of the celebrations, with their children and grandchildren travelling across the Commonwealth on her behalf. A month later, Elizabeth officially opens the 2012 Olympic Games on 27 July and the Paralympic Games on 29 August.

Record-breaking reign
Elizabeth passes Queen Victoria's record of longest reigning monarch. In 2017, she became the first British ruler to celebrate a Sapphire Jubilee (65 years).
9 September 2015

2021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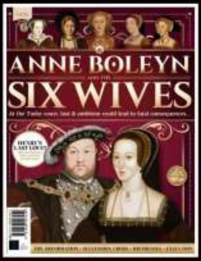
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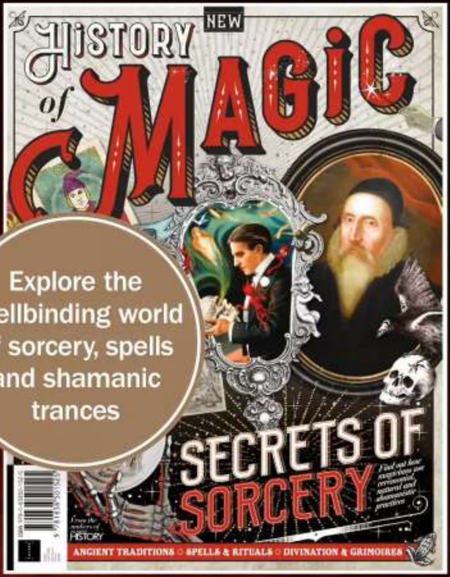
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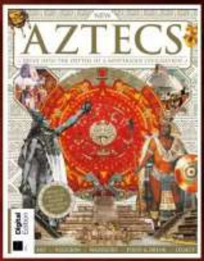

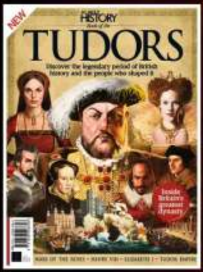
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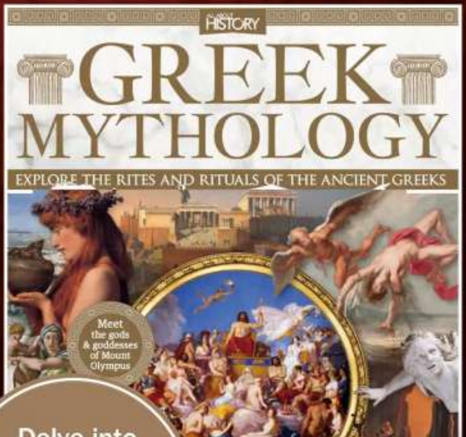
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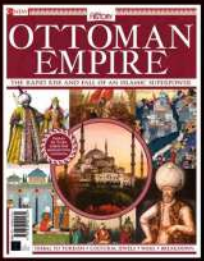
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